

SELECT POEMS

COLERIDGE
WORDSWORTH

EDITED BY
W. J. ALEXANDER.

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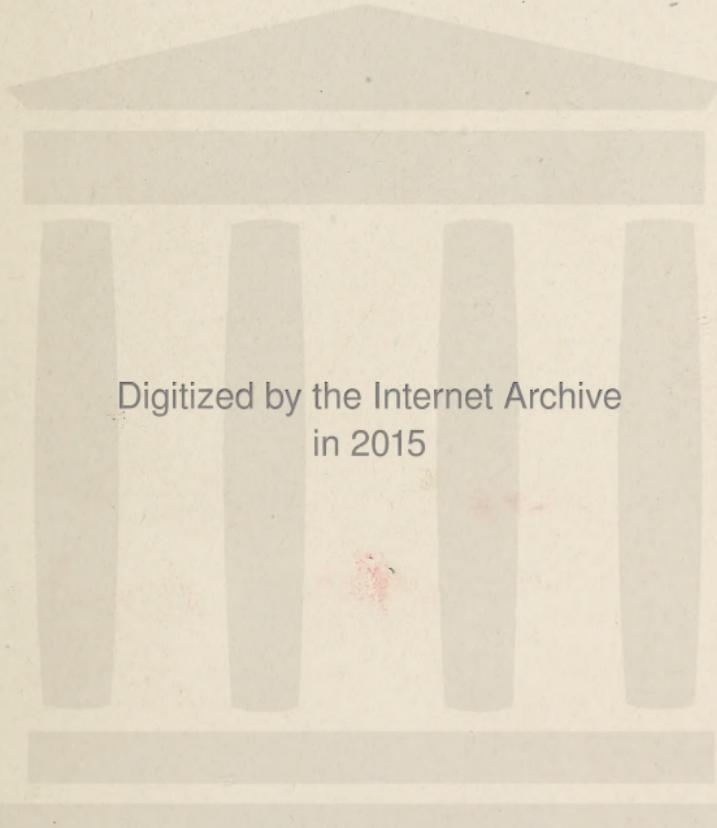


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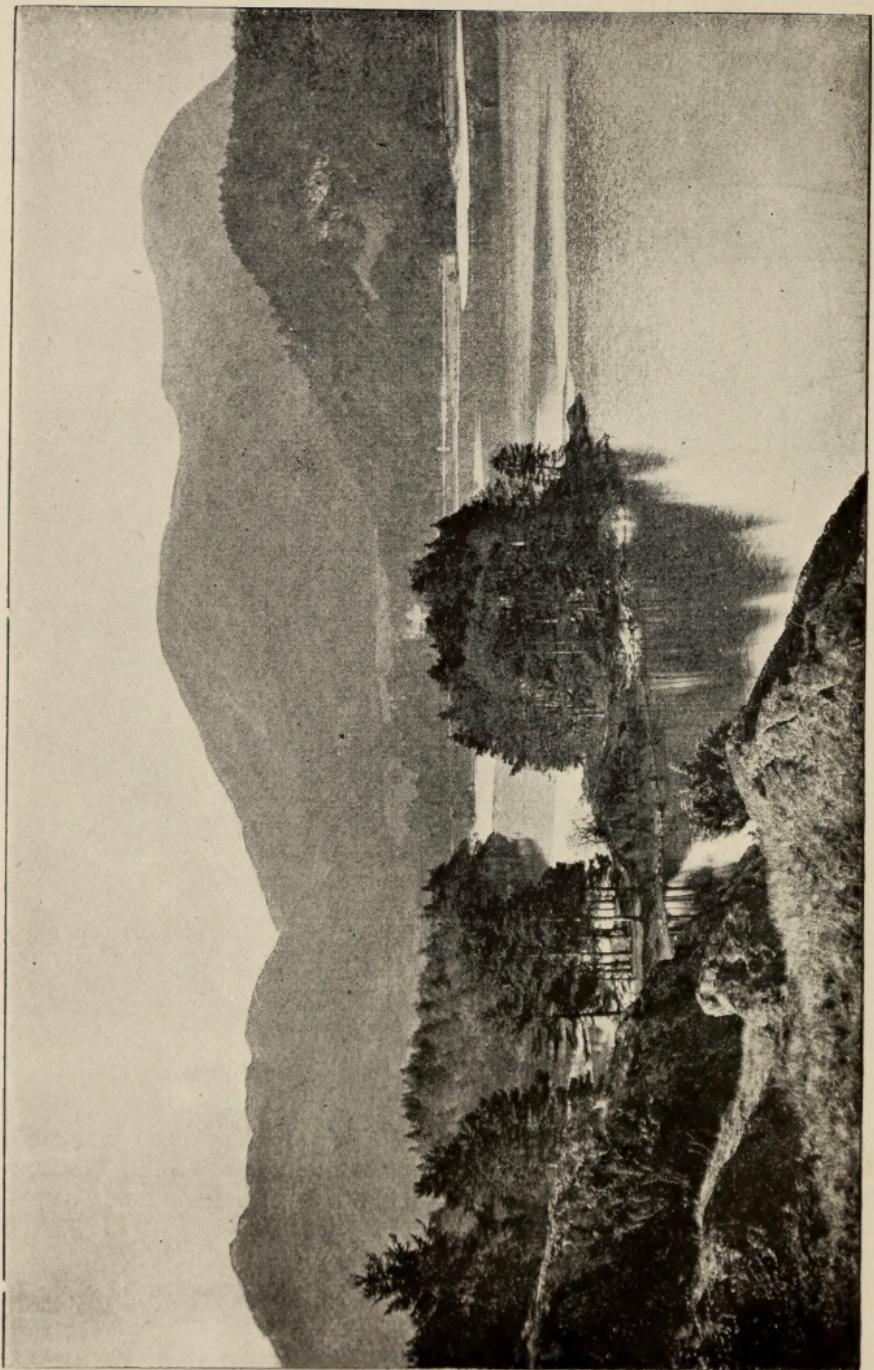


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SELECT POEMS

FROM

COLERIDGE AND WORDSWORTH

PRESCRIBED FOR UNIVERSITY AND NORMAL SCHOOL
ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS,

1912.

EDITED WITH

INTRODUCTION AND BRIEF NOTES

BY

W. J. ALEXANDER, PH.D.,

Professor of English in University College, Toronto.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF "THE ANCIENT MARINER."

Difficulties in Appreciating the Poem.—Those critics who assign the highest place to the poetic work of Coleridge, are wont to confess exceptional difficulty in making an analysis of the factors in his poetry which give rise to their admiration and a basis to their judgment. For example, Mr. Swinburne writes: “Of his best verses I venture to affirm that the world has nothing like them and can never have; that they are of the highest kind and of their own. . . . Of his flight and song when in the fit element, it is hard to speak at all, hopeless to speak adequately. It is natural that there should be nothing like them discoverable in any human work; natural that his poetry at its highest should be, as it is, beyond all praise and all words of men. He who could define it aright could ‘unweave a rainbow,’ he who could praise it aright would be such another as the poet.” Yet in the case of *The Ancient Mariner* at least, some detailed account of its poetic effectiveness is eminently desirable, since from its first publication there has been a disposition among the critics, while admitting its many beauties, to find it falling short of the standard of the highest poetic worth,—sometimes because of its alleged lack of truth and good sense, sometimes because of its incoherence, sometimes for its want of moral significance, sometimes, on the contrary, because its imaginative excellence has been sacrificed to moral sentiments.* And at the present day, though the general verdict of the most competent judges has indisputably been given in favour of the poem, the ordinary reader who does not at once submit to its charm, is apt to be full of objections and

* Within a month of its publication Southey, speaking anonymously in the *Critical Review*, says of *The Ancient Mariner*: “Many of the stanzas are laboriously beautiful, but in connection they are absurd and unintelligible . . . We do not sufficiently understand the story to analyse it. It is a Dutch attempt at German sublimity. Genius has here been employed in producing a poem of little merit.” And a few months later, the *Monthly Review* styles it “the strangest story of a cock and bull that we ever saw on paper . . . it seems a rhapsody of unintelligible wildness and incoherence . . . there are however in it poetical touches of an exquisite kind.”

of questions ;* whilst the defender finds his task of accounting for his enthusiasm, much less easy than it would be in the case of a play of Shakespeare or, indeed, of almost any other work which has given to its writer a high place among English poets. The chief cause of all this lies in the fact that *The Ancient Mariner* appeals so exclusively to the æsthetic sense, and so little either to the intellect or to normal human sympathies.† The perception of truth, of the successful representation of life and character, and the understanding and feeling for human joys and sorrows are developed by every-day experience ; whereas the lack of such inevitable education of the sense for artistic beauty makes the power of appreciating it the rarer. A sagacious mind little open to poetic effects may find much to interest and to excite admiration in the dramas of Shakespeare, as he who has no sense for beauty of form and colour, may appreciate the truth of a portrait ; whilst on the one hand, knowledge of the world and clearness of intellect are of no avail in such an art as music, where there is no appeal except to the sense of beauty of sound and its combinations. Poetry, unlike music, deals not with sounds merely, but with language, which is necessarily the expression of thought. Hence in poetry we *may* find what appeals to common sense :—truth, the

* To the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth appended an apologetic note on *The Ancient Mariner*, which is interesting as showing the limitation of Wordsworth's poetic taste and as enumerating some objections which may be taken against the poem : “I cannot refuse myself the gratification of informing such Readers as may have been pleased with this Poem, or with any part of it, that they owe their pleasure in some sort to me ; as the Author was himself very desirous that it should be suppressed. This wish had arisen from a consciousness of the defects of the Poem, and from a knowledge that many persons had been much displeased with it. The Poem of my Friend has indeed great defects ; first, that the principal person has no distinct character, either in his profession of Mariner or as a human being who having been long under the control of supernatural impressions might be supposed himself to partake of something supernatural ; secondly, that he does not act, but is continually acted upon ; thirdly, that the events having no necessary connection do not produce each other ; and lastly, that the imagery is somewhat too laboriously accumulated. Yet the Poem contains many delicate touches of passion, and indeed the passion is everywhere true to nature ; a great number of the stanzas present beautiful images and are expressed with unusual felicity of language, and the versification, though the metre is itself unfitted for long poems, is harmonious and artfully varied, exhibiting the utmost powers of that metre, and every variety of which it is capable.”

† “It would need Coleridge the critic to discover the secrets of the genius of Coleridge the poet. To solve intellectual puzzles in verse, to condense a diffused body of doctrine, to interpret what is called a poet's criticism of life is after all not difficult ; but to find expressions in the language of thought corresponding to pure melody and imaginative loveliness is a finer exercise of wit.” (*Dowden's Coleridge as a Poet.*)

criticism of life, the facts of human nature ; yet valuable as these are, and largely as they may contribute to our pleasure, they are not themselves necessarily poetical, and cannot of themselves give poetic excellence to the work which contains them. Or again, poetry may be great because it profoundly stirs our sympathies ; but then it must deal with what comes within the range of familiar experience. Now, the theme of *The Ancient Mariner* is like the theme of a fairy tale,—so remote in its incidents from reality, that it appeals but little to our sense of truth, and cannot intensely excite our emotional nature. Hence to those who lack the special ear for the essentially poetical, this poem is likely to seem trivial ; whilst those, who spite of the little value they are disposed consciously to put upon artistic charm, are yet captivated by the beauty of this poem, often seek to justify their preference by alleging the existence of an allegorical meaning or a moral lesson.* Such attempts to force a deeper significance upon *The Ancient Mariner*, are really destructive of its main strength, which is æsthetic, and lies in its artistic consistency and unity—in its perfect harmony, beauty and completeness, if regarded from its own point of view. To enjoy it we must follow Coleridge's own critical method :—take it for what, on the face of it, it is ; and not mar our satisfaction and its beauty by attempting to thrust it into a sphere (even if that be a higher one) to which it does not properly belong.

Its Fundamental Character.—“*The Ancient Mariner*,” says Pater, “is a ‘romantic’ poem, impressing us by bold invention, and appealing to that taste for the supernatural, that longing for a *shudder*, to which the romantic school in Germany, and its derivatives in France and England, directly ministered.” Fundamentally, then, this poem is a story addressed to the universal taste for the marvellous and weird, strongest in children and in the primitive stages of society, yet inherent, though it may be overlaid, in more mature minds and more enlightened ages. At the date of its composition, there was an extra-

* In his *Table Talk* Coleridge is reported as saying : “Mrs. Barbauld once told me that she admired *The Ancient Mariner* very much, but that there were two faults in it,—it was improbable, and had no moral. As for the probability, I owned that might admit some question ; but as to the want of a moral, I told her that in my own judgment the poem had too much ; and that the only or chief fault, if I might say so, was the obtrusion of the moral sentiment so openly on the reader as a principle or cause of action in a work of such pure imagination. It ought to have had no more moral than the Arabian Nights' tale of the merchant's sitting down to eat dates by the side of a well, and throwing the shells aside, and lo ! a genii starts up, and says he *must* kill the aforesaid merchant, *because* one of the date-shells had, it seems, put out the eye of the genii's son.” (*Table Talk*, May 31, 1830.)

ordinary revival of the appetite for the supernatural ; and *The Ancient Mariner*, far from being exceptional as regards its theme, is another example of the fact that a great masterpiece is never an isolated phenomenon, but the outcome of favouring circumstances in the times, as well as of exceptional gifts in its creator

Antecedent Conditions.—The explanation of the flourishing of the supernatural at so late and so “illuminated” a period as the latter half of the Eighteenth century, lies mainly in the principle of reaction. At successive epochs in the history of a race or a community, various tendencies or principles become predominant which give a direction to the whole mental activity of the time, are likely to be carried to excess, and hence to involve the temporary checking of equally natural tendencies in other directions. In course of time, these latter, in turn, are wont to reassert themselves ; and with the greater emphasis, the longer and more successfully they have been repressed. A familiar example is the revolt against the strained asceticism of Puritanism, as exhibited in the excesses of society during the reign of Charles II. Now, it is a very manifest and familiar fact to students of English literature, that during a period extending, roughly speaking, from the Restoration to the death of Pope (1660-1744), there was a marked predilection, in the world of thought and literature, for ideas, principles and themes that were congenial to the purely logical thinking faculty, at the expense of all that addressed itself to the heart and imagination. We might instance, for example, the sphere of religion : the main stress during this period was laid upon the moral code of Christianity, the manifest utility of which for the well-being of the individual and of society was patent to common sense ; whereas the more mystical and emotional side—the sense of the hatefulness of sin, of intimate personal relations with the Founder of Christianity, or with the Creator, and other states of feeling which have always been in the ascendant during periods of religious quickening—were but little felt or valued. Indeed enthusiasm and fervour were under the ban in the most approved orthodox circles. The theological literature of the same date was busied with showing the reasonableness of Christianity, reducing the supernatural to the smallest possible limits, and demonstrating that Christian teachings are exactly those which would have been attained, without supernatural revelation, on a candid view of the universe by a sensible man. The reaction against this dry intellectualism was earliest and most clearly apparent in the Methodist development towards the close of the first half of the Eighteenth century. Here religious conviction was not

based upon arguments addressed to universal reason, but upon an appeal to a personal experience,—the sense of sin, of pardon, and so forth. Such a preacher as Whitfield sought to reach the heart rather than the reason; and the progress of the movement was marked, in the case both of individuals and of large collections of men, by extraordinary emotional phenomena. A similar revolution from the explicable and intellectual towards the mysterious and emotional took place at approximately the same era in all possible spheres: even, for example, in landscape gardening, where the formal and prim Dutch system with its straight paths, clipped shrubbery and artificial water-courses, was superseded by an attempt to reproduce the variety, complexity, and irregularity of nature,—to a fashion, accordingly, which stimulated the imagination through mystery and unexpectedness. In literature, the rational period is best typified in the poetry of Pope, dealing, as it does, most successfully and frequently, either with abstract truths—generalizations of experience which interest the cultivated intellect; or with satiric pictures of contemporary society, which, as is inevitable with satire, appeal to the reader's judgment of what is proper and congruous, rather than rouses emotion through sympathy with the persons and situations presented. The style, too, in keeping with the theme, does not so much aim at charming the sensuous perception and at stimulating the feeling by the richness, complexity and fitness of its music, as at gratifying the judgment by the rhetorical force and aptness with which each point is expressed.

The reaction towards the emotional and imaginative naturally had its excessive and morbid sides. In the first place, there is the bent towards Sentimentalism, the indulgence in emotion without adequate grounds and on every occasion. The most conspicuous examples of the literature of Sentimentalism are to be found outside of England (for the movement of which we are speaking was not insular but European) in the writings of Rousseau and in Goethe's *Sorrows of Werther*. In England, Sterne's works exhibit the same tendency, and traces of it are very widely perceptible, for instance in Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*. In the second place, there existed a craving for the more unusual, pungent, and violent stimulants to feeling. Something of this was manifest in the marked fashion for "grave-yard" poetry, which had so noble an outcome in Gray's *Elegy*; but the taste was more particularly shown in the predilection for the marvellous and horrible, the mysterious and supernatural—for themes which would have been stigmatized as childish and trivial by the sensible men of the world whose

preferences gave law to literature in the days of Anne and George I. Hence it is that English fiction, which in the hands of DeFoe, Richardson and Fielding had hitherto been realistic, began to develop the novel of wonder and romance. Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1765), M. G. Lewis's *Monk* (1796) *Castle Spectre* and *Tales of Wonder*, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and other novels of Mrs. Radcliffe, and many episodes in Scott's poetry and prose are all the outcome of the prevalent fashion. *The Ancient Mariner* is, therefore, not an isolated product; but, among many attempts, the supremely successful embodiment of a certain sort of interest which is native to the human heart, and which, at this particular date, had gained greater ascendancy than at any era since the dawn of the critical spirit. It treats the weirdly supernatural in a spirit suited to modern taste.

General Conception.—By what means, we may next inquire, is Coleridge successful in giving for a modern reader, the highest pleasure compatible with such a theme? The task was not an easy one; the generation for which he wrote, like our own, was wholly sceptical as to the existence of such supernatural agents and events as are represented in the poem, however ready to yield them, for the purposes of imaginative enjoyment, a temporary belief. Hence the handling of the subject was necessarily a matter of extreme delicacy and tact,—a very different task from the treatment which might have sufficed for a credulous mediæval audience. The artist must throw an atmosphere about his story which may help his readers to see its events in a different light from that in which they regard the possible occurrences of actual life; he must, in as far as possible, remove all impediments to poetic faith, and prevent all unpleasant collisions between the fancies which he conjures up, and the hard facts of real experience. To attain this end, Coleridge, in the first place, adopts, for the setting of the story, certain devices, usual and sufficiently obvious but executed with rare skill. As to time, he thrusts his scene back into an undefined period of the past where vagueness and remoteness make the extraordinary more credible; and, as to place, into a region real indeed and permitting real description, but almost unknown and wholly unfamiliar.* For similar

* "Any one examining the poem with a critical eye for its machinery and groundwork will have noticed that Coleridge is careful not to introduce any element of the marvellous or supernatural until he has transported the reader beyond the pale of definite geographical knowledge, and then left behind him all those conditions of the known and the familiar, all those associations with recorded fact and experience, which would have created an inimical atmosphere. . . . In some half-dozen stanzas, beginning with 'The ship was cleared,' we find ourselves crossing the line and driven

reasons, the author withdraws himself as far as possible from notice ; he constructs a narrative within a narrative, told by the hero himself. Of the frame thus afforded to the main story, the poet makes the happiest use ; the reality of the experiences is, as it were, attested by the impression produced upon the imaginary auditors ; and the suggestiveness of these references are far more potent over the imagination than any detailed description addressed directly to the reader. More important than these artifices is the general form into which the story is cast. The great era of credulity and of the marvellous is the Middle Ages, and its literature and traditions afforded the chief storehouse for gratifying the new appetite for the romantic. It was this, among other things, that caused the marked revival of interest in earlier literature that characterized the century with which we are dealing. For Coleridge's contemporaries, such themes as that of *The Ancient Mariner* were associated with mediæval forms. Hence, to lure his readers into the proper state of mind, he employs, not one of the literary modes of his own day, but the mediæval ballad. The stanza, the phraseology, the quaint marginal commentary, the naïvety and other peculiarities of treatment, serve to give the proper atmosphere, to make us feel we are in a sphere where the prosaic standards of our own time do not apply.*

Special Merits.—These devices for giving imaginative plausibility to the story are very necessary factors in the success of the poem, but they are within the reach of a mediocre artist ; and apart from the pleasure we have in the perception of the successful imitation of the ballad, they are rather conditions requisite to the success of the poem, than themselves factors which actually produce enjoyment. It is upon more subtle and evasive qualities, often of course beyond the reach of analysis, that the specific beauty of the work depends. In the first place, for the treatment of a theme of this character, Coleridge has manifestly special qualification : the dreaminess and visionariness of his temperament, the love of mysticism which is manifest even in his philosophy, his confessed taste for "all the strange phantoms that

far beyond the Southern Pole. Beyond a few broad indications thus vouchsafed, Coleridge very astutely takes pains to avoid anything like geography. We reach that silent sea into which we are the first that ever burst, and that is sufficient for imaginative ends. It is enough that the world, as known to actual navigators, is left behind, and a world which the poet is free to colonize with the wildest children of his dreaming brain, has been entered. Thenceforward we cease to have any direct relations with the verifiable. Natural law is suspended : standards of probability have ceased to exist." (*William Watson, Excursions in Criticism.*)

*Cf. the device of the Minstrel in Scott's *Lay.*

ever possessed ‘your philosophy’ dreamers,” and “his odd and out-of-the-way reading in the old-fashioned literature of the marvellous—books like Purchas’s *Pilgrims*, early voyages like Hakluyt’s, old naturalists and visionary moralists like Burnet.” Then he was a psychologist, skilled in the subtler workings of the mind and is very successful in what he sets down* as the main purpose of this poem :—“the exciting of the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature” so as to interest “the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions as would naturally accompany the situations of the poem, supposing them to be real.”† It must be noted, too, that, however unreal the general situation may be, the feelings of the hero are, many of them, as much within the range of ordinary human sympathy as anything in literature. The poem belongs to the weird yet not wholly so ; and indeed in the edition of 1817, the crude horror and grotesqueness which were the outcome of a passing phase of fashion, are retrenched, and the author manifests a stronger confidence in the permanent elements of beauty and interest in his work. But, after all, it is not so much Coleridge the psychologist, or Coleridge the student of quaint and bygone literature, or even Coleridge the dreamer, as Coleridge the artist of the beautiful, that does most for the success of the poem. Note, first of all, the skill of his adaptation of the ballad form. The ballad, one of the most primitive and popular species of literature that survive, has marked characteristics that arose from the circumstances of its production. It was originally extemporized in the presence of an audience ; on subsequent occasions reproduced partly from memory, partly under the inspiration of new listeners and new conditions ; then transmitted from minstrel to minstrel, and reshaped by each. Thus there was finally evolved a composite product sometimes admirably fitted for immediate effect upon hearers who were neither subtle nor critical, but who did possess to the full all the fundamental and universal artistic capabilities of human nature. The ballad is, in consequence, stamped with marked excellences and very manifest defects. Coleridge reproduces the former, and even adapts the latter to his own purposes. In brevity and swiftness of development, his poem does not fall behind its model ; and the rapid transitions of the ballad proper are eminently suitable for a series of pictures which charm by their strangeness and

* Pp. 93-4 below.

† Note, for example, how the sense of strained and anxious attention is communicated in ll. 149 fol. ; the effectiveness and truth of the representation of feeling in ll. 232-262, and in the simile at l. 446 ; and the natural touch of the yearning for homely repose at l. 601 fol.

novelty, but which are not intended to bear the scrutiny of the sceptical intellect. In concreteness and picturesqueness nothing can exceed this work; in a stroke or two, with unsurpassed brevity, a picture is conjured up in most vivid outlines before the mind, to be replaced in a moment by another and another in an almost uninterrupted panorama.* The variations in verse structure and in the stanza form often found in his models—in them the result of mere inadvertence or helplessness—are seized upon by Coleridge to give complexity and variety to a stanza which would grow monotonous in a long work. Indeed here, as elsewhere, in spite of what might be supposed to be the limitations of his metrical formula, Coleridge shows himself a master of verse music.† The melody of the versification maintains the sense of pervading beauty in the poem, and this is further strongly reënforced by the pictures of nature which Coleridge has so freely lavished throughout his story. These give beauty, they give background, they intensify the sense of reality; above all, they are employed with the utmost art to produce the sense of contrast and relief in the more weird and painful scenes of the story.

Its Imaginative Unity.—These are some of the factors of the poet's success, but the effect is not merely the sum of these; the ultimate secret of the impression produced by *The Ancient Mariner*, is that every one of these components serves to intensify the others; it is the perfect unity of conception and execution. Its greatness depends in the poet's imaginative power, in virtue of which he can subordinate a vast number of details to single artistic conception. He surpasses, as Mrs. O'lyphant points out, in his faithfulness to a single conception, and

* For example, count the number of vivid pictures that succeed one another in the first nine stanzas.

† "It is enough for us here that [he] has written some of the most poetical poetry in the language, and one poem, *The Ancient Mariner*, not only unparalleled, but unapproached in its kind, and that kind of the rarest. It is marvellous in the mastery over that delightfully fortuitous inconsequence that is the adamantine logic of dreamland. Coleridge has taken the old ballad measure and given to it by an undefinable charm wholly his own, all the sweetness, all the melody and compass of a symphony. And how picturesque it is in the proper sense of the word. I know nothing like it. There is not a description in it. It is all picture. Descriptive poets generally confuse us with multiplicity of detail; we cannot see their forest for the trees; but Coleridge never errs in this way. With instructive tact he touches the right chord of association, and is satisfied, as we also are. I should find it hard to explain the singular charm of his diction, there is so much nicety of art and purpose in it, whether for music or for meaning. Nor does it need any explanation, for we all feel it." (*J. R. Lowell, Democracy and Other Addresses.*)

in the completeness of his execution of it; in the fashion in which everything which the poem embraces, is brought into a harmony under one dominant imaginative mood: "Like a great shadow moving noiselessly over the widest sweep of mountain and plain, a pillar of cloud—or like flight of indescribable fleecy hosts of winged vapours spreading their impalpable influence like a breath changing the face of the earth, subduing the thoughts of men, yet nothing and capable of no interpretation—such was the great poem destined to represent in the world of poetry the effect which these mystic cloud agencies have upon the daylight and the sky."* Even the moral of which Coleridge himself thought there might be too much, and which many critics find inadequate or unsatisfactory, is merely a chord in this imaginative symphony; it is not introduced for the prosaic purpose of teaching a lesson; that the reader should regard the moral as dominating the poem, would lead to a distortion of the whole effect, and lay the work open to criticism on grounds of unity and of truth. It is the Mariner, and not the poet, who draws the moral at the close; and its introduction serves an artistic and not a didactic purpose—to give a sense of repose and homeliness in which we may rest after the weirdness and excitement of the voyage. "Then comes," to quote Mrs. Oliphant again, "the ineffable half-childish, half-divine simplicity of those soft moralisings at the end, so strangely different from the tenor of the tale, so wonderfully perfecting its visionary strain. . . . This unexpected gentle conclusion brings our feet back to the common soil with a bewildered sweetness of relief and soft quiet," after the strain of the preceding narrative. But if we will not submit to the poet's witchcraft and will not be content with the exquisite world of fancy into which he introduces us, if we persist in regarding the poem as existing for the sake of the moral, then indeed we may object that there is something incongruous and untrue in the nexus of crime and punishment. Profound, practical truths may be embodied in poetry, which, if as perfect in execution as *The Ancient Mariner*, might doubtless lay claim to excellence of a higher order; but taking the poem for what on the face of it it is, we may well agree with the dictum of the author: "*The Ancient Mariner* can not be imitated, nor the poem *Love*. They may be excelled; they are not imitable."

* Mrs. Oliphant's *Literary History of England*.

COLERIDGE.

THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER.

IN SEVEN PARTS.

PART I.

An ancient
Mariner meet-
eth three Gal-
lants bidden to
a wedding-feast,
and detaineth
one.

It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
“By thy long gray beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp’st thou me ?

“The Bridegroom’s doors are opened wide,
And I am next of kin ;
The guests are met, the feast is set :
May’st hear the merry din.”

5

He holds him with his skinny hand,
“There was a ship,” quoth he.
“Hold off! unhand me, gray-beard loon !”
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

10

The Wedding-
Guest is spell-
bound by the
eye of the old
seafaring man,
and constrained
to hear his tale.

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years’ child :
The Mariner hath his will.

15

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone :
 He cannot choose but hear ;
 And thus spake on that ancient man,
 The bright-eyed Mariner :—

20

“The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
 Merrily did we drop
 Below the kirk, below the hill,
 Below the lighthouse top.

The Mariner
 tells how the
 ship sailed
 southward with
 a good wind and
 fair weather, till
 it reached the
 line.

“The Sun came up upon the left,
 Out of the sea came he !
 And he shone bright, and on the right
 Went down into the sea.

25

“Higher and higher every day,
 Till over the mast at noon”—
 The Wedding-Guest nere beat his breast,
 For he heard the loud bassoon.

30

The Wedding-
 Guest heareth
 the bridal
 music ; but the
 Mariner con-
 tinueth his tale.

The bride hath paced into the hall,
 Red as a rose is she ;
 Nodding their heads before her goes
 The merry minstrelsy.

35

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
 Yet he cannot choose but hear ;
 And thus spake on that ancient man,
 The bright-eyed Mariner.

40

The ship drawn
 by a storm
 towards the
 south pole.

“And now the storm-blast came, and he
 Was tyrannous and strong ;
 He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
 And chased us south along.

With sloping masts and dipping prow, 45
 As who pursued with yell and blow
 Still treads the shadow of his foe,
 And forward bends his head,
 The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
 And southward aye we fled. 50

And now there came both mist and snow,
 And it grew wondrous cold :
 And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
 As green as emerald.

The land of ice, 55
 and of fearful sounds, where
 no living thing
 was to be seen.
 And through the drifts, the snowy cliffs
 Did send a dismal sheen .
 Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
 The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,
 The ice was all around : 60
 It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
 Like noises in a swound !

Till a great sea- 65
 bird, called the
 Albatross, came
 through the
 snow-fog, and
 was received
 with great joy
 and hospitality.
 At length did cross an Albatross :
 Thorough the fog it came ;
 As if it had been a Christian soul,
 We hailed it in God's name.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
 And round and round it flew.
 The ice did split with a thunder-fit ;
 The helmsman steered us through ! 70

And lo ! the
 Albatross
 provesth a bird
 of good omen,
 and followeth
 the ship as it
 returned north-
 ward through
 fog and floating
 ice.
 And a good south wind sprung up behind ;
 The Albatross did follow,
 And every day, for food or play,
 Came to the mariners' hollo !

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
It perched for vespers nine ;
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmered the white moon-shine.”

The ancient
Mariner inhos-
pitably killeth
the pious bird
of good omen.

“ God save thee, ancient Mariner,
From the fiends that plague thee thus !—
Why look’st thou so ?”—“ With my cross-bow
I shot the Albatross ! ”

75

80

85

PART II.

The Sun now rose upon the right :
Out of the sea came he,
Still hid in mist, and on the left
Went down into the sea.

And the good south wind still blew behind,
But no sweet bird did follow,
Nor any day for food or play
Came to the mariners’ hollo !

90

His shipmates
cry out against
the ancient
Mariner, for
killing the bird
of good luck.

And I had done a hellish thing,
And it would work ’em woe :
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
Ah wretch ! said they, the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow !

95

But when the
fog cleared off
they justify the
same, and thus
make them-
selves accom-
plices in the
crime.

Nor dim, nor red, like God’s own head,
The glorious Sun uprise :
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist.
”Twas right, said they, such birds to slay
That bring the fog and mist.

100

The fair breeze continues ; the ship enters the Pacific Ocean, and sails northward, even till it reaches the Line.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free ;
We were the first that ever burst
105
reaches the Line. Into that silent sea.

The ship hath been suddenly becalmed.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
'Twas sad as sad could be ;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea !

110

All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.

Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion ;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

115

And the Albatross begins to be avenged.

Water, water, everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink ;
Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink.

120

The very deep did rot : O Christ !
That ever this should be !
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
125
Upon the slimy sea.

A spirit had followed them ;
one of the invisible inhabitants of this planet, neither

About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires danced at night ;
The wa'er, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green and blue and white.

130

departed souls
nor angels ;
concerning
whom the
learned Jew,
Josephus, and
the Platonic
Constantinopo-
litian, Michael
Psellus, may be
consulted.
They are very
numerous, and
there is no cli-
mate or element
without one or
more.

The shipmates,
in their sore
distress would
fain throw the
whole guilt on
the ancient
Mariner; in sign
whereof they
hang the dead
sea-bird round
his neck.

The ancient
Mariner behold-
eth a sign in the
element afar off.

And some in dreams assurèd were
Of the spirit that plagued us so ;
Nine fathom deep he had followed us
From the land of mist and snow.

And every tongue, through utter drought, 135
Was withered at the root ;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.

Ah ! well a-day ! what evil looks
Had I from old and young ! 140
Instead of the Cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.

PART III.

There passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parched, and glazed each eye.
A weary time ! a weary time ! 145
How glazed each weary eye !
When looking westward, I beheld
A something in the sky.

At first it seemed a little speck,
And then it seemed a mist : 150
It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain shape, I wist.

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist !
And still it neared and neared :
And as if it dodged a water-sprite, 155
It plunged, and tacked, and veered.

At its nearer
approach, it
seemeth him to
With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
We could nor laugh nor wail ;

be a ship ; and
at a dear ran-
som he free'd
his speech from
the bonds of
thirst.

Through utter drought all dumb we stood
I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
And cried, A sail ! a sail !

160

A flash of joy.

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call :
Gramercy ! they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in,
As they were drinking all.

165

And horror fol-
lows ; for can it
be a ship that
comes onward
without wind
or tide ?

See ! see ! (I cried) she tacks no more !
Hither to work us weal ;
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel !

170

The western wave was all a-flame,
The day was well-nigh done !
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad bright Sun ;
When that strange shape drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the Sun.

175

It seemeth him
but the skele-
ton of a ship.

And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,
(Heaven's Mother send us grace !)
As if through a dungeon-grate he peered
With broad and burning face.

180

Alas ! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)
How fast she nears and nears !
Are those *her* sails that glance in the Sun,
Like restless gossameres ?

And its ribs are
seen as bars on
the face of the
setting sun.
The spectre-
woman and her

Are those *her* ribs through which the Sun
Did peer, as through a grate ?
And is that Woman all her crew ?

185

death-mate,
and no other
on board the
skeleton ship.
Like vessel, like
crew !

Is that a Death ? and are there two ?
Is Death that woman's mate ?

Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold :
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Night-mare Life-in-Death was she,
Who thickens man's blood with cold.

190

Death and Life-
in-Death have
diced for the
ship's crew, and
she (the latter)
winnethe the
ancient Mariner.

The naked hulk alongside came,
And the twain were casting dice ;
“ The game is done ! I've won, I've won ! ”
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

195

No twilight
within the
courts of the
sun.

The Sun's rim dips ; the stars rush out :
At one stride comes the dark ;
With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,
Off shot the spectre-bark.

200

At the rising of
the moon.

We listened and looked sideways up !
Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
My life-blood seemed to sip !
The stars were dim, and thick the night,
The steerman's face by his lamp gleamed white ;
From the sails the dew did drip—
Till clomb above the eastern bar
The hornèd Moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip.

205

One after
another.

One after one, by the star-dogged Moon,
Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,
And cursed me with his eye.

215

His shipmates
drop down
dead.

Four times fifty living men,
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropped down one by one.

But Life-in-
Death begins
her work on the
ancient Mariner.

The souls did from their bodies fly,—
They fled to bliss or woe !
And every soul, it passed me by,
Like the whizz of my cross-bow !

220

The Wedding-
guest feareth
that a spirit is
talking to him.

“ I fear thee, ancient Mariner !
I fear thy skinny hand !
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

225

But the ancient
Mariner as-
sureth him of
his bodily life,
and proceedeth
to relate his
horrible pen-
ance.

I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
And thy skinny hand so brown.”—
Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest !
This body dropt not down.

230

Alone, alone, all all alone,
Alone on a wide wide sea !
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.

235

He despiseth
the creatures of
the calm.

The many men, so beautiful !
And they all dead did lie ;
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on ; and so did I.

And enviieth
that they should
live, and so
many lie dead.

I looked upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away ;
I looked upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

240

I looked to heaven, and tried to pray
 But or ever a prayer had gusht,
 A wicked whisper came, and made
 My heart as dry as dust.

245

I closed my lids, and kept them close,
 And the balls like pulses beat ;
 For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky, 250
 Lay like a load on my weary eye,
 And the dead were at my feet.

But the curse
 liveth for him
 in the eye of
 the dead men.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
 Nor rot nor reek did they :
 The look with which they looked on me
 Had never passed away.

255

An orphan's curse would drag to hell
 A spirit from on high ;
 But oh ! more horrible than that
 Is the curse in a dead man's eye !

260

In his loneliness
 and fixedness
 he yearneth to-
 wards the
 journeying
 moon, and the
 stars that still
 sojourn, yet still
 move onward ;
 and everywhere
 the blue sky be-
 longs to them,
 and is their
 appointed rest,
 and their native
 country and
 their own
 natural homes,
 which they enter
 unannounced,
 as lords that are
 certainly ex-
 pected, and yet
 there is a silent
 joy at their
 arrival.

The moving moon went up the sky,
 And nowhere did abide ;
 Softly she was going up,
 And a star or two beside—

265

Her beams bemocked the sultry main,
 Like April hoar-frost spread ;
 But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
 The charmèd water burnt alway
 A still and awful red.

270

By the light of
the Moon he be-
holdeth God's
creatures of the
great calm.

Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watched the water-snakes :
They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they reared, the elfish light 275
Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire :
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam ; and every track 280
Was a flash of golden fire.

Their beauty
and their
happiness.

O happy living things ! no tongue
Their beauty might declare ;
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware ! 285
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

The spell begins
to break.

The selfsame moment I could pray ;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank 290
Like lead into the sea.

PART V.

O sleep ! it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole !
To Mary Queen the praise be given !
She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven, 295
That slid into my soul.

By grace of the
holy Mother,
the ancient
Mariner is re-
freshed with
rain.

The silly buckets on the deck,
That had so long remained,
I dreamt that they were filled with dew ;
And when I awoke, it rained. 300

My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
 My garments all were dank ;
 Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
 And still my body drank.

I moved, and could not feel my limbs : 305
 I was so light—almost
 I thought that I had died in sleep,
 And was a blessed ghost.

He heareth
 sounds and
 seeth strange
 sights and com-
 motions in the
 sky and the
 element.

And soon I heard a roaring wind :
 It did not come anear ; 310
 But with its sound it shook the sails,
 That were so thin and sere.

The upper air burst into life !
 And a hundred fire-flags sheen,
 To and fro they were hurried about ! 315
 And to and fro, and in and out,
 The wan stars danced between.

And the coming wind did roar more loud,
 And the sails did sigh like sedge ;
 And the rain poured down from one black cloud :
 The moon was at its edge. 321

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still
 The moon was at its side :
 Like waters shot from some high crag,
 The lightning fell with never a jag, 325
 A river steep and wide.

The bodies of
 the ship's crew
 are inspirited,
 and the ship
 moves on :

The loud wind never reached the ship,
 Yet now the ship moved on !
 Beneath the lightning and the moon
 The dead men gave a groan. 330

They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,
 Nor spake, nor moved their eyes ;
 It had been strange, even in a dream,
 To have seen those dead men rise.

The helmsman steered ; the ship moved on ; 335
 Yet never a breeze up-blew ;
 The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
 Where they were wont to do ;
 They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—
 We were a ghastly crew. 340

The body of my brother's son
 Stood by me, knee to knee ;
 The body and I pulled at one rope,
 But he said nought to me.

but not by the "I fear thee, ancient Mariner !" 345
 souls of the
 men, nor by de-
 mons of earth
 or middle air,
 but by a blessed
 troop of angelic
 spirits, sent
 down by the in-
 vocation of the
 guardian saint.
 Be calm thou Wedding-Guest !
 'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
 Which to their corses came again,
 But a troop of spirits blest :
 For when it dawned—they dropped their arms, 350
 And clustered round the mast ;
 Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths,
 And from their bodies passed.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,
 Then darted to the sun ; 355
 Slowly the sounds came back again,
 Now mixed, now one by one.

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
 I heard the sky-lark sing ;
 Sometimes all little birds that are, 360

How they seemed to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning !

And now 'twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute ;
And now it is an angel's song,
That makes the heavens be mute.

365

It ceased ; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

370

Till noon we quietly sailed on,
Yet never a breeze did breathe ;
Slowly and smoothly went the ship,
Moved onward from beneath.

375

The lonesome spirit from the south pole carries on the ship as far as the line, in obedience to the angelic troop, but still requireth vengeance.

Under the keel nine fathom deep,
From the land of mist and snow,
The spirit slid ; and it was he
That made the ship to go.
The sails at noon left off their tune,
And the ship stood still also.

380

The sun, right up above the mast,
Had fixed her to the ocean ;
But in a minute she 'gan stir,
With a short uneasy motion—
Backwards and forwards half her length
With a short uneasy motion.

385

Then like a pawing horse let go,
She made a sudden bound :

390

It flung the blood into my head,
And I fell down in a swoon.

The Polar
Spirit's fellow-
demons, the in-
visible inhabi-
tants of the ele-
ment, take part
in his wrong ;
and two of them
relate, one to
the other, that
penance long
and heavy for
the ancient
Mariner hath
been accorded
to the Polar
Spirit, who re-
turneth south-
ward.

How long in that same fit I lay,
I have not to declare ;
But ere my living life returned,
I heard, and in my soul discerned,
Two voices in the air.

395

“ Is it he ? ” quoth one, “ Is this the man ?
By Him who died on cross,
With his cruel bow he laid full low
The harmless Albatross.

400

“ The spirit who bideth by himself
In the land of mist and snow,
He loved the bird that loved the man
Who shot him with his bow.”

405

The other was a softer voice,
As soft as honey-dew :
Quoth he, “ The man hath penance done,
And penance more will do.”

PART VI.

FIRST VOICE.

But tell me, tell me ! speak again,
Thy soft response renewing—
What makes that ship drive on so fast ?
What is the Ocean doing ?

410

SECOND VOICE.

Still as a slave before his lord,
The Ocean hath no blast ;
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the moon is cast—

415

If he may know which way to go ;
 For she guides him smooth or grim.
 See, brother, see ! how graciously
 She looketh down on him.

420

FIRST VOICE.

The Mariner
 hath been cast
 into a trance ;
 for the angelic
 power causeth
 the vessel to
 drive northward
 faster than
 human life
 could endure.

But why drives on that ship so fast,
 Without or wave or wind ?

SECOND VOICE.

The air is cut away before,
 And closes from behind.

425

Fly, brother, fly ! more high, more high !
 Or we shall be belated :
 For slow and slow that ship will go,
 When the Mariner's trance is abated.

The super-
 natural motion
 is retarded ; the
 Mariner awakes,
 and his penance
 begins anew.

I woke, and we were sailing on
 As in a gentle weather :
 "Twas night, calm night, the moon was high ;
 The dead men stood together.

430

All stood together on the deck,
 For a charnel-dungeon fitter ;
 All fixed on me their stony eyes,
 That in the moon did glitter.

435

The pang, the curse, with which they died,
 Had never passed away :
 I could not draw my eyes from theirs,
 Nor turn them up to pray.

440

The curse is
 finally expiated.

And now this spell was snapt : once more
 I viewed the ocean green,
 And looked far forth, yet little saw
 Of what had else been seen—

445

Like one, that on a lonesome road
 Doth walk in fear and dread,
 And having once turned round, walks on,
 And turns no more his head ;
 Because he knows a frightful fiend 450
 Doth close behind him tread.

But soon there breathed a wind on me,
 Nor sound nor motion made :
 Its path was not upon the sea,
 In ripple or in shade. 455

It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek
 Like a meadow-gale of spring—
 It mingled strangely with my fears,
 Yet it felt like a welcoming.

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship, 460
 Yet she sailed softly too :
 Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—
 On me alone it blew.

And the ancient Mariner behold-
 eth his native country. 465
 Oh ! dream of joy ! is this indeed
 The lighthouse top I see ?
 Is this the hill ? is this the kirk ?
 Is this mine own countree ?

We drifted o'er the harbour-bar,
 And I with sobs did pray—
 'O let me be awake, my God ! 470
 Or let me sleep alway.'

The harbour-bay was clear as glass,
 So smoothly it was strewn !
 And on the bay the moonlight lay,
 And the shadow of the moon. 475

The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,
 That stands above the rock :
 The moonlight steeped in silentness
 The steady weathercock.

And the bay was white with silent light, 480
 Till rising from the same,

The angelic spirits leave the dead bodies, Full many shapes, that shadows were,
 In crimson colours came.

and appear in their own forms of light. A little distance from the prow
 Those crimson shadows were :

I turned my eyes upon the deck—
 Oh Christ ! what saw I there !

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
 And, by the holy rood !

A man all light, a seraph-man,
 On every corse there stood.

490

This seraph-band, each waved his hand :
 It was a heavenly sight !
 They stood as signals to the land,
 Each one a lovely light ;

495

This seraph-band, each waved his hand :
 No voice did they impart—
 No voice ; but oh ! the silence sank
 Like music on my heart.

But soon I heard the dash of oars,
 I heard the Pilot's cheer ;
 My head was turned perforce away,
 And I saw a boat appear.

500

The Pilot and the Pilot's boy,
I heard them coming fast : 505
Dear Lord in Heaven ! it was a joy
The dead men could not blast.

I saw a third—I heard his voice :
It is the Hermit good !
He singeth loud his godly hymns 510
That he makes in the wood.
He'll shrieve my soul, he'll wash away
The Albatross's blood.

PART VII.

**The Hermit of
the wood** This Hermit good lives in that wood
Which slopes down to the sea. 515

How loudly his sweet voice he rears !
He loves to talk with marineres
That come from a far countree.

He kneels at morn, and noon, and eve—
He hath a cushion plump : 520
It is the moss that wholly hides
The rotted old oak-stump.

The skiff-boat neared : I heard them talk,
“ Why, this is strange, I trow !
Where are those lights so many and fair, 525
That signal made but now ? ”

**approacheth
the ship
with wonder.** “ Strange, by my faith ! ” the Hermit said—
“ And they answered not our cheer !
The planks look warped ! and see those sails,
How thin they are and sere ! 530
I never saw aught like to them,
Unless perchance it were

Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
 My forest-brook along ;
 When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,
 And the owlet whoops to the wolf below,
 That eats the she-wolf's young.”

535

“Dear Lord ! it hath a fiendish look—
 (The Pilot made reply)
 I am a-feared”—“Push on, push on !”
 Said the Hermit cheerily.

540

The boat came closer to the ship,
 But I nor spake nor stirred ;
 The boat came close beneath the ship,
 And straight a sound was heard.

545

The ship suddenly sinketh.

Under the water it rumbled on,
 Still louder and more dread :
 It reached the ship, it split the bay ;
 The ship went down like lead.

The ancient Mariner is saved in the Pilot's boat.

Stunned by that loud and dreadful sound,
 Which sky and ocean smote,
 Like one that hath been seven days drowned
 My body lay afloat ;
 But swift as dreams, myself I found
 Within the Pilot's boat.

550

555

Upon the whirl where sank the ship,
 The boat spun round and round ;
 And all was still, save that the hill
 Was telling of the sound.

I moved my lips—the Pilot shrieked
 And fell down in a fit ;

560

The holy Hermit raised his eyes,
And prayed where he did sit.

I took the oars : the Pilot's boy,
Who now doth crazy go, 565
Laughed loud and long, and all the while
His eyes went to and fro.
“Ha ! ha !” quoth he, “full plain I see
The Devil knows how to row.”

And now, all in my own countree,
I stood on the firm land !
The Hermit stepped forth from the boat,
And scarcely he could stand.

“O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man !”
The Hermit crossed his brow.
“Say quick,” quoth he, “I bid thee say—
What manner of man art thou ?”

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
With a woful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale ; 580
And then it left me free,

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns :
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns. 585

I pass, like night, from land to land ;
I have strange power of speech ;
The moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me :
To him my tale I teach. 590

The ancient
Mariner earn-
estly entreatheth
the Hermit to
shrieve him ;
and the penance
of life falls on
him.

What loud uproar bursts from that door !
 The wedding-guests are there ;
 But in the garden-bower the bride
 And bride-maids singing are :
 And hark the little vesper bell,
 Which biddeth me to prayer !

595

O Wedding-Guest ! this soul hath been
 Alone on a wide, wide sea :
 So lonely 'twas, that God himself
 Scarce seemèd there to be.

600

O sweeter than the marriage feast,
 'Tis sweeter far to me,
 To walk together to the kirk
 With a goodly company !—

To walk together to the kirk,
 And all together pray,
 While each to his great Father bends,
 Old men, and babes, and loving friends,
 And youths and maidens gay !

605

and to teach, by Farewell, farewell ! but this I tell
 his own example, love and reverence to all
 things that God made and loveth.

610

To thee, thou Wedding-Guest !
 He prayeth well who loveth well
 Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best who loveth best
 All things both great and small ;
 For the dear God who loveth us.
 He made and loveth all.

615

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
 Whose beard with age is hoar,

Is gone : and now the Wedding-Guest 620
Turned from the bridegroom's door.

He went like one that hath been stunned,
And is of sense forlorn :
A sadder and a wiser man,
He rose the Morrow morn. 625

WORDSWORTH.

THE REVERIE OF POOR SUSAN.

At the corner of Wood Street, when daylight appears,
Hangs a Thrush that sings loud, it has sung for three years :
Poor Susan has passed by the spot, and has heard
In the silence of morning the song of the Bird.

"Tis a note of enchantment ; what ails her ? She sees 5
A mountain ascending, a vision of trees ;
Bright volumes of vapour through Lothbury glide,
And a river flows on through the vale of Cheapside.

Green pastures she views in the midst of the dale,
Down which she so often has tripped with her pail ; 10
And a single small cottage, a nest like a dove's,
The one only dwelling on earth that she loves.

She looks, and her heart is in heaven : but they fade,
The mist and the river, the hill and the shade :
The stream will not flow, and the hill will not rise, 15
And the colours have all passed away from her eyes.

—1797

TO MY SISTER.

It is the first mild day of March :
Each minute sweeter than before,
The redbreast sings from the tall larch
That stands beside our door.

There is a blessing in the air, 5
Which seems a sense of joy to yield
To the bare trees, and mountains bare,
And grass in the green field.

My sister ! ('tis a wish of mine)
 Now that our morning meal is done,
 Make haste, your morning task resign ;
 Come forth and feel the sun.

10

Edward will come with you ;—and, pray,
 Put on with speed your woodland dress ;
 And bring no book : for this one day
 We'll give to idleness.

15

No joyless forms shall regulate
 Our living calendar :
 We from to-day, my Friend, will date
 The opening of the year.

20

Love, now a universal birth,
 From heart to heart is stealing,
 From earth to man, from man to earth :
 —It is the hour of feeling.

One moment now may give us more
 Than years of toiling reason :
 Our minds shall drink at every pore
 The spirit of the season.

25

Some silent laws our hearts will make,
 Which they shall long obey :
 We for the year to come may take
 Our temper from to-day.

30

And from the blessed power that rolls
 About, below, above,
 We'll frame the measure of our souls :
 They shall be tuned to love.

35

Then come, my Sister ! come, I pray,
 With speed put on your woodland dress ;
 And bring no book : for this one day
 We'll give to idleness.

40

1798

EXPOSTULATION AND REPLY.

“Why, William, on that old grey stone,
 Thus for the length of half a day,
 Why, William, sit you thus alone,
 And dream your time away ?

Where are your books ?—that light bequeathed
 To Beings else forlorn and blind !
 Up ! up ! and drink the spirit breathed
 From dead men to their kind.

5

You look round on your Mother Earth,
 As if she for no purpose bore you ;
 As if you were her first-born birth,
 And none had lived before you !”

10

One morning thus, by Esthwaite lake,
 When life was sweet, I knew not why,
 To me my good friend Matthew spake,
 And thus I made reply :

15

“The eye—it cannot choose but see ;
 We cannot bid the ear be still ;
 Our bodies feel, where'er they be,
 Against, or with our will.

20

Nor less I deem that there are Powers
 Which of themselves our minds impress ;
 That we can feed this mind of ours
 In a wise passiveness.

Think you, 'mid all this mighty sum
Of things for ever speaking,
That nothing of itself will come,
But we must still be seeking ?

25

—Then ask not wherefore, here, alone,
Conversing as I may,
I sit upon this old grey stone,
And dream my time away.”

30

—1798

THE TABLES TURNED.

AN EVENING SCENE ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

Up ! up ! my Friend, and quit your books ;
Or surely you'll grow double :
Up ! up ! my Friend, and clear your looks ;
Why all this toil and trouble ?

The sun, above the mountain's head,
A freshening lustre mellow
Through all the long green fields has spread,
His first sweet evening yellow.

5

Books ! 'tis a dull and endless strife .
Come, hear the woodland linnet,
How sweet his music ! on my life,
There's more of wisdom in it.

10

And hark ! how blithe the throstle sings !
He, too, is no mean preacher :
Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your teacher.

15

She has a world of ready wealth,
Our minds and hearts to bless—
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
Truth breathed by cheerfulness. 20

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings ; 25
Our meddling intellect
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things :—
We murder to dissect.

Enough of Science and of Art ;
Close up those barren leaves ; 30
Come forth, and bring with you a heart
That watches and receives.

—1798

"THREE YEARS SHE GREW IN SUN AND
SHOWER."

Three years she grew in sun and shower,
Then Nature said, "A lovelier flower
On earth was never sown ;
This Child I to myself will take,
She shall be mine, and I will make 5
A Lady of my own.

Myself will to my darling be
Both law and impulse : and with me
The Girl, in rock and plain,
In earth and heaven, in glade and bower, 10
Shall feel an overseeing power
To kindle or restrain.

She shall be sportive as the fawn
 That wild with glee across the lawn
 Or up the mountain springs ;
 And her's shall be the breathing balm,
 And her's the silence and the calm
 Of mute insensate things.

15

The floating clouds their state shall lend
 To her ; for her the willow bend ;
 Nor shall she fail to see
 Even in the motion of the Storm
 Grace that shall mould the Maiden's form
 By silent sympathy.

20

The stars of midnight shall be dear
 To her ; and she shall lean her ear
 In many a secret place
 Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
 And beauty born of murmuring sound
 Shall pass into her face.

25

30

And vital feelings of delight
 Shall rear her form to stately height,
 Her virgin bosom swell ;
 Such thoughts to Lucy I will give
 While she and I together live
 Here in this happy dell.”

35

Thus Nature spake—the work was done—
 How soon my Lucy's race was run !
 She died, and left to me
 This heath, this calm and quiet scene ;
 The memory of what has been,
 And never more will be.

40

INFLUENCE OF NATURAL OBJECTS.

IN CALLING FORTH AND STRENGTHENING THE IMAGINATION IN
BOYHOOD AND EARLY YOUTH. WRITTEN IN GERMANY.

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe !
 Thou Soul, that art the Eternity of thought !
 And giv'st to forms and images a breath
 And everlasting motion ! not in vain,
 By day or star-light, thus from my first dawn 5
 Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
 The passions that build up our human soul ;
 Not with the mean and vulgar works of Man ;
 But with high objects, with enduring things,
 With life and nature ; purifying thus 10
 The elements of feeling and of thought,
 And sanctifying by such discipline
 Both pain and fear,—until we recognize
 A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.

Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me 15
 With stinted kindness. In November days,
 When vapours rolling down the valleys made
 A loneiy scene more lonesome ; among woods
 At noon ; and 'mid the calm of summer nights,
 When, by the margin of the trembling lake, 20
 Beneath the gloomy hills, homeward I went
 In solitude, such intercourse was mine :
 Mine was it in the fields both day and night,
 And by the waters, all the summer long.
 And in the frosty season, when the sun 25
 Was set, and, visible for many a mile,
 The cottage-windows through the twilight blazed,
 I heeded not the summons : happy time
 It was indeed for all of us ; for me
 It was a time of rapture ! Clear and loud 30

The village-clock tolled six—I wheeled about,
 Proud and exulting like an untired horse
 That cares not for his home.—All shod with steel
 We hissed along the polished ice, in games
 Confederate, imitative of the chase

35

And woodland pleasures,—the resounding horn,
 The pack loud-chiming, and the hunted hare.
 So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
 And not a voice was idle: with the din
 Smitten, the precipices rang aloud ;

40

The leafless trees and every icy crag
 Tinkled like iron ; while far-distant hills
 Into the tumult sent an alien sound
 Of melancholy, not unnoticed while the stars,
 Eastward, were sparkling clear, and in the west

45

The orange sky of evening died away.

Not seldom from the uproar I retired
 Into a silent bay, or sportively
 Glanced sideway, leaving the tumultuous throng,

50

To cut across the reflex of a star ;

Image, that, flying still before me, gleamed
 Upon the glassy plain ; and oftentimes,
 When we had given our bodies to the wind,
 And all the shadowy banks on either side

55

Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still

The rapid line of motion, then at once

Have I, reclining back upon my heels,

Stopped short ; yet still the solitary cliffs

Wheeled by me—even as if the earth had rolled

With visible motion her diurnal round !

60

Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,

Feebler and feeble, and I stood and watched

Till all was tranquil as a summer sea.

NUTTING.

—It seems a day

(I speak of one from many singled out)

One of those heavenly days that cannot die;

When, in the eagerness of boyish hope,

I left our cottage-threshold, sallying forth

5

With a huge wallet o'er my shoulder slung,

A nutting-crook in hand ; and turned my steps

Tow'rd the far-distant wood, a Figure quaint,

Tricked out in proud disguise of cast-off weeds,

Which for that service had been husbanded,

10

By exhortation of my frugal Dame—

Motly accoutrement, of power to smile

At thorns, and brakes, and brambles,—and, in truth,

More ragged than need was ! O'er pathless rocks,

Through beds of matted fern, and tangled thickets,

15

Forcing my way, I came to one dear nook

Unvisited, where not a broken bough

Drooped with its withered leaves, ungracious sign

Of devastation ; but the hazels rose

Tall and erect, with tempting clusters hung,

20

A virgin scene !—A little while I stood,

Breathing with such suppression of the heart

As joy delights in ; and, with wise restraint,

Voluptuous, fearless of a rival, eyed

The banquet ;—or beneath the trees I sate

25

Among the flowers, and with the flowers I played ;

A temper known to those who, after long

And weary expectation, nave seen otest

With sudden happiness beyond all hope.

Perhaps it was a bower beneath whose leaves

30

The violets of five seasons re-appear

And fade, unseen by any human eye ;

Where fairy water-breaks do murmur on
Forever ; and I saw the sparkling foam,
And—with my cheek on one of those green stones
That, fleeced with moss, **under the shady trees,** 35
Lay round me, scattered like a flock of sheep—
I heard the murmur and the murmuring sound,
In that sweet mood when pleasure loves to pay
Tribute to ease ; and, of its joy secure, 40
The heart luxuriates with indifferent things,
Wasting its kindliness on stocks and stones,
And on the vacant air. Then up I rose,
And dragged to earth both branch and bough, with crash
And merciless ravage : and the shady nook 45
Of hazels, and the green and mossy bower,
Deformed and sullied, patiently gave up
Their quiet being : and, unless I now
Confound my present feeling with the past,
Ere from the mutilated bower I turned 50
Exulting, rich beyond the wealth of kings,
I felt a sense of pain when I beheld
The silent trees and saw the intruding sky.—
Then, dearest Maiden, move along these shades
In gentleness of heart , with gentle hand 55
Touch—for there is a spirit in the woods.

MICHAEL.

A PASTORAL POEM.

If from the public way you turn your steps
 Up the tumultuous brook of Greenhead Ghyll,
 You will suppose that with an upright path
 Your feet must struggle ; in such bold ascent
 The pastoral mountains front you, face to face. 5

But, courage ! for around that boisterous brook
 The mountains have all opened out themselves,
 And made a hidden valley of their own.
 No habitation can be seen ; but they
 Who journey thither find themselves alone 10

With a few sheep, with rocks and stones, and kites
 That overhead are sailing in the sky.
 It is, in truth, an utter solitude ;
 Nor should I have made mention of this Dell
 But for one object which you might pass by, 15

Might see and notice not. Beside the brook
 Appears a straggling heap of unhewn stones :
 And to that simple object appertains,
 A story—unenriched with strange events,
 Yet not unfit, I deem, for the fireside, 20

Or for the summer shade. It was the first
 Of those domestic tales that spake to me
 Of shepherds, dwellers in the valleys, men
 Whom I already loved :—not verily
 For their own sakes, but for the fields and hills 25

Where was their occupation and abode.
 And hence this Tale, while I was yet a Boy
 Careless of books, yet having felt the power
 Of Nature, by the gentle agency
 Of natural objects, led me on to feel 30

For passions that were not my own, and think
 (At random and imperfectly indeed)
 On man, the heart of man, and human life.
 Therefore, although it be a history
 Homely and rude, I will relate the same
 For the delight of a few natural hearts ;
 And, with yet fonder feeling, for the sake
 Of youthful Poets, who among these hills
 Will be my second self when I am gone.

35

Upon the forest-side in Grasmere Vale 40
 There dwelt a Shepherd, Michael was his name ;
 An old man, stout of heart, and strong of limb.
 His bodily frame had been from youth to age
 Of an unusual strength : his mind was keen,
 Intense, and frugal, apt for all affairs, 45
 And in his shepherd's calling he was prompt
 And watchful more than ordinary men.
 Hence had he learned the meaning of all winds,
 Of blasts of every tone ; and, oftentimes,
 When others heeded not, he heard the South 50
 Make subterraneous music, like the noise
 Of bagpipers on distant Highland hills.
 The Shepherd, at such warning, of his flock
 Bethought him, and he to himself would say,
 "The winds are now devising work for me !" 55
 And, truly, at all times, the storm, that drives
 The traveller to a shelter, summoned him
 Up to the mountains : he had been alone
 Amid the heart of many thousand mists,
 That came to him, and left him, on the heights. 60
 So lived he till his eightieth year was past.
 And grossly that man errs, who should suppose
 That the green valleys, and the streams and rocks,

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60

Were things indifferent to the Shepherd's thoughts.
 Fields, where with cheerful spirits he had breathed 65
 The common air ; hills, which with vigorous step
 He had so often climbed ; which had impressed
 So many incidents upon his mind
 Of hardship, skill or courage, joy or fear ;
 Which, like a book, preserved the memory 70
 Of the dumb animals whom he had saved,
 Had fed or sheltered, linking to such acts,
 The certainty of honourable gain ;
 Those fields, those hills,—what could they less?—had laid
 Strong hold on his affections, were to him 75
 A pleasurable feeling of blind love,
 The pleasure which there is in life itself.

His days had not been passed in singleness.
 His Helpmate was a comely matron, old—
 Though younger than himself full twenty years. 80
 She was a woman of a stirring life,
 Whose heart was in her house : two wheels she had
 Of antique form ; this large, for spinning wool ;
 That small, for flax ; and if one wheel had rest
 It was because the other was at work. 85
 The Pair had but one inmate in their house,
 An only Child, who had been born to them
 When Michael, telling o'er his years, began
 To deem that he was old,—in shepherd's phrase,
 With one foot in the grave. This only Son, 90
 With two brave sheep-dogs tried in many a storm,
 The one of an inestimable worth,
 Made all their household. I may truly say,
 That they were as a proverb in the vale
 For endless industry. When day was gone, 95
 And from their occupations out of doors

The Son and Father were come home, even then,
 Their labour did not cease ; unless when all
 Turned to the cleanly supper-board, and there,
 Each with a mess of pottage and skimmed milk, 100
 Sat round the basket piled with oaten cakes,
 And their plain home-made cheese. Yet when the meal
 Was ended, Luke (for so the Son was named)
 And his old Father both betook themselves
 To such convenient work as might employ 105
 Their hands by the fireside ; perhaps to card
 Wool for the Housewife's spindle, or repair
 Some injury done to sickle, flail, or scythe,
 Or other implement of house or field.

Down from the ceiling, by the chimney's edge, 110
 That in our ancient uncouth country style
 With a huge and black projection overbrowed
 Large space beneath, as duly as the light
 Of day grew dim the Housewife hung a lamp ;
 An aged utensil, which had performed 115
 Service beyond all others of its kind.
 Early at evening did it burn—and late,
 Surviving comrade of uncounted hours,
 Which, going by from year to year, had found,
 And left the couple neither gay perhaps 120
 Nor cheerful, yet with objects and with hopes,
 Living a life of eager industry.
 And now, when Luke had reached his eighteenth year,
 There by the light of this old lamp they sate,
 Father and Son, while late into the night 125
 The Housewife plied her own peculiar work,
 Making the cottage through the silent hours
 Murmur as with the sound of summer flies.
 This light was famous in its neighbourhood,

- And was a public symbol of the life 130
The thrifty Pair had lived. For, as it chanced,
Their cottage on a plot of rising ground
Stood single, with large prospect, north and south,
High into Easdale, up to Dunmail-Raise,
And westward to the village near the lake ; 135
And from this constant light, so regular
And so far seen, the House itself, by all
Who dwelt within the limits of the vale,
Both old and young, was named THE EVENING STAR.

- Thus living on through such a length of years,
The Shepherd, if he loved himself, must needs
Have loved his Helpmate ; but to Michael's heart
This son of his old age was yet more dear—
Less from instinctive tenderness, the same
Fond spirit that blindly works in the blood of all— 145
Than that a child, more than all other gifts
That earth can offer to declining man,
Brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts,
And stirrings of inquietude, when they
By tendency of nature needs must fail. 150
Exceeding was the love he bare to him,
His heart and his heart's joy ! For oftentimes
Old Michael, while he was a babe in arms,
Had done him female service, not alone
For pastime and delight, as is the use
Of fathers, but with patient mind enforced
To acts of tenderness ; and he had rocked
His cradle, as with a woman's gentle hand. 155

- And, in a later time, ere yet the Boy
Had put on boy's attire, did Michael love,
Albeit of a stern, unbending mind,
To have the Young-one in his sight, when he

Wrought in the field, or on his shepherd's stool
 Sate with a fettered sheep before him stretched
 Under the large old oak, that near his door
 Stood single, and, from matchless depth of shade,
 Chosen for the Shearer's covert from the sun,
 Thence in our rustic dialect was called
 The CLIPPING TREE, a name which yet it bears.
 There, while they two were sitting in the shade,
 With others round them, earnest all and blithe,
 Would Michael exercise his heart with looks
 Of fond correction and reproof bestowed
 Upon the Child, if he disturbed the sheep
 By catching at their legs, or with his shouts
 Scared them, while they lay still beneath the shears.

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And when by Heaven's good grace the boy grew up
 A healthy Lad, and carried in his cheek
 Two steady roses that were five years old ;
 Then Michael from a winter coppice cut
 With his own hand a sapling, which he hooped
 With iron, making it throughout in all
 Due requisites a perfect shepherd's staff,
 And gave it to the Boy ; wherewith equipt
 He as a watchman oftentimes was placed
 At gate or gap, to stem or turn the flock ;
 And, to his office prematurely called,
 There stood the urchin, as you will divine,
 Something between a hindrance and a help ;
 And for this cause, not always, I believe,
 Receiving from his Father hire of praise ;
 Though nought was left undone which staff, or voice,
 Or looks, or threatening gestures, could perform.

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But soon as Luke, full ten years old, could stand
 Against the mountain blasts, and to the heights,

Not fearing toil, nor length of weary ways,
 He with his Father daily went, and they
 Were as companions, why should I relate
 That objects which the Shepherd loved before
 Were dearer now ? that from the Boy there came 200
 Feelings and emanations—things which were
 Light to the sun and music to the wind :
 And that the old Man's heart seemed born again ?

Thus in his father's sight the Boy grew up :
 And now, when he had reached his eighteenth year, 205
 He was his comfort and his daily hope.

While in this sort the simple household lived
 From day to day, to Michael's ear there came
 Distressful tidings. Long before the time
 Of which I speak, the Shepherd had been bound 210
 In surety for his brother's son, a man
 Of an industrious life, and ample means ;
 But unforeseen misfortunes suddenly
 Had prest upon him ; and old Michael now
 Was summoned to discharge the forfeiture, 215
 A grievous penalty, but little less
 Than half his substance. This unlooked-for claim,
 At the first hearing, for a moment took
 More hope out of his life than he supposed
 That any old man ever could have lost. 220
 As soon as he had armed himself with strength
 To look his trouble in the face, it seemed
 The Shepherd's sole resource to sell at once
 A portion of his patrimonial fields.
 Such was his first resolve ; he thought again, 225
 And his heart failed him. "Isabel," said he,
 Two evenings after he had heard the news,
 "I have been toiling more than seventy years,

And in the open sunshine of God's love
 Have we all lived ; yet if these fields of ours
 Should pass into a stranger's hand, I think
 That I could not lie quiet in my grave.
 Our lot is a hard lot : the sun himself
 Has scarcely been more diligent than I ;
 And I have lived to be a fool at last
 To my own family. An evil man
 That was, and made an evil choice, if he
 Were false to us ; and if he were not false,
 There are ten thousand to whom loss like this
 Had been no sorrow. I forgive him ;—but
 'Twere better to be dumb than to talk thus.

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240

When I began, my purpose was to speak
 Of remedies and of a cheerful hope.
 Our Luke shall leave us, Isabel ; the land
 Shall not go from us, and it shall be free ;
 He shall possess it, free as is the wind
 That passes over it. We have, thou know'st,
 Another kinsman—he will be our friend
 In this distress. He is a prosperous man,
 Thriving in trade—and Luke to him shall go,
 And with his kinsman's help and his own thrift
 He quickly will repair this loss, and then
 He may return to us. If here he stay,
 What can be done ? Where every one is poor,
 What can be gained ?”

245
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At this the old Man paused, 255
 And Isabel sat silent, for her mind
 Was busy, looking back into past times.
 There's Richard Bateman, thought she to herself,
 He was a parish-boy—at the church-door
 They made a gathering for him, shillings, pence

260

And halfpennies, wherewith the neighbours bought
A basket, which they filled with pedlar's wares ;
And, with this basket on his arm, the lad
Went up to London, found a master there,
Who, out of many, chose the trusty boy 265
To go and overlook his merchandise
Beyond the seas ; where he grew wondrous rich,
And left estates and monies to the poor,
And, at his birth-place, built a chapel, floored
With marble, which he sent from foreign lands.
These thoughts, and many others of like sort,
Passed quickly through the mind of Isabel,
And her face brightened. The old Man was glad,
And thus resumed :—" Well, Isabel ! this scheme
These two days, has been meat and drink to me.
Far more than we have lost is left us yet.
—We have enough—I wish indeed that I
Were younger ;—but this hope is a good hope.
—Make ready Luke's best garments, of the best
Buy for him more, and let us send him forth
To-morrow, or the next day, or to-night :
—If he could go, the Boy should go to-night." 275
280

Here Michael ceased, and to the fields went forth
With a light heart. The Housewife for five days
Was restless morn and night, and all day long 285
Wrought on with her best fingers to prepare
Things needful for the journey of her son.
But Isabel was glad when Sunday came
To stop her in her work : for when she lay
By Michael's side, she through the last two nights 290
Heard him, how he was troubled in his sleep :
And when they rose at morning she could see
That all his hopes were gone. That day at noon

She said to Luke, while they two by themselves
 Were sitting at the door, “Thou must not go :
 We have no other Child but thee to lose,
 None to remember—do not go away,
 For if thou leave thy Father, he will die.”
 The Youth made answer with a jocund voice ;
 And Isabel, when she had told her fears,
 Recovered heart. That evening her best fare
 Did she bring forth, and all together sat
 Like happy people round a Christmas fire.

295

300

With daylight Isabel resumed her work ;
 And all the ensuing week the house appeared
 As cheerful as a grove in Spring : at length
 The expected letter from their kinsman came,
 With kind assurances that he would do
 His utmost for the welfare of the Boy ;
 To which requests were added that forthwith
 He might be sent to him. Ten times or more
 The letter was read over ; Isabel
 Went forth to show it to the neighbours round ;
 Nor was there at that time on English land
 A prouder heart than Luke’s. When Isabel
 Had to her house returned, the old Man said,
 “He shall depart to-morrow.” To this word
 The Housewife answered, talking much of things
 Which, if at such short notice he should go,
 Would surely be forgotten. But at length
 She gave consent, and Michael was at ease.

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Near the tumultuous brook of Greenhead Ghyll
 In that deep valley, Michael had designed
 To build a Sheepfold ; and, before he heard
 The tidings of his melancholy loss,
 For this same purpose he had gathered up

- A heap of stones, which by the streamlet's edge
 Lay thrown together, ready for the work.
 With Luke that evening thitherward he walked :
 And soon as they had reached the place he stopped, 330
 And thus the old Man spake to him : " My Son,
 To-morrow thou wilt leave me : with full heart
 I look upon thee, for thou art the same
 That wert a promise to me ere thy birth
 And all thy life hast been my daily joy. 335
- I will relate to thee some little part
 Of our two histories ; 'twill do thee good
 When thou art from me, even if I should touch
On things thou canst not know of.—After thou
 First cam'st into the world—as oft befalls 340
 To new-born infants—thou didst sleep away
 Two days, and blessings from thy Father's tongue
 Then fell upon thee. Day by day passed on,
 And still I loved thee with increasing love.
 Never to living ear came sweeter sounds 345
 Than when I heard thee by our own fireside
 First uttering, without words, a natural tune ;
 While thou, a feeding babe, didst in thy joy
 Sing at thy Mother's breast. Month followed month,
 And in the open fields my life was passed 350
 And on the mountains ; else I think that thou
 Hadst been brought up upon thy Father's knees.
 But we were playmates, Luke : among these hills,
 As well thou knowest, in us the old and young
 Have played together, nor with me didst thou 355
 Lack any pleasure which a boy can know."
 Luke had a manly heart ; but at these words
 He sobbed aloud. The old Man grasped his hand,
 And said, " Nay, do not take it so—I see
 That these are things of which I need not speak. 360

—Even to the utmost I have been to thee
A kind and a good Father: and herein
I but repay a gift which I myself
Received at others' hands; for, though now old
Beyond the common life of man, I still 365
Remember them who loved me in my youth.
Both of them sleep together: here they lived,
As all their Forefathers had done; and when
At length their time was come, they were not loath
To give their bodies to the family mould. 370
I wished that thou should'st live the life they lived:
But 'tis a long time to look back, my Son,
And see so little gain from threescore years.
These fields were burdened when they came to me;
Till I was forty years of age, not more 375
Than half of my inheritance was mine.
I toiled and toiled; God blessed me in my work,
And till these three weeks past the land was free.
—It looks as if it never could endure
Another Master. Heaven forgive me, Luke, 380
If I judge ill for thee, but it seems good
That thou should'st go.”

At this the old Man paused ;

Then, pointing to the stones near which they stood,
Thus, after a short silence, he resumed :
“This was a work for us ; and now, my Son, 385
It is a work for me. But lay one stone—
Here, lay it for me, Luke, with thine own hands.
Nay, Boy, be of good hope ;—we both may live
To see a better day. At eighty-four
I still am strong and hale ;—do thou thy part ; 390
I will do mine.—I will begin again
With many tasks that were resigned to thee :
Up to the heights and in among the storms

Will I without thee go again, and do
All works which I was wont to do alone,395
Before I knew thy face.—Heaven bless thee, Boy!
Thy heart these two weeks has been beating fast
With many hopes ; it should be so—yes—yes—
I knew that thou could'st never have a wish
To leave me, Luke : thou hast been bound to me400
Only by links of love: when thou art gone,
What will be left to us!—But, I forget
My purposes. Lay now the corner-stone
As I requested ; and hereafter, Luke,405
When thou art gone away, should evil men
Be thy companions, think of me, my Son,
And of this moment ; hither turn thy thoughts,
And God will strengthen thee : amid all fear
And all temptations, Luke, I pray that thou410
May'st bear in mind the life thy Fathers lived,
Who, being innocent, did for that cause
Bestir them in good deeds. Now, fare thee well—
When thou return'st, thou in this place wilt see
A work which is not here :—a covenant
'Twill be between us ;—but, whatever fate415
Befall thee, I shall love thee to the last,
And bear thy memory with me to the grave."

The Shepherd ended here ; and Luke stooped down
And, as his Father had requested, laid
The first stone of the Sheepfold. At the sight 420
The old Man's grief broke from him ; to his heart
He pressed his Son, he kissèd him and wept ;
And to the house together they returned.
—Hushed was that House in peace, or seeming peace,
Ere the night fell :—with morrow's dawn the Boy 425
Began his journey, and when he had reached
The public way, he put on a bold face ;

And all the neighbours, as he passed their doors,
Came forth with wishes and with farewell prayers,
That followed him till he was out of sight.

430

A good report did from their Kinsman come,
Of Luke and his well-doing : and the Boy
Wrote loving letters, full of wondrous news,
Which, as the Housewife phrased it, were throughout
“The prettiest letters that were ever seen.”

435

Both parents read them with rejoicing hearts.
So, many months passed on ; and once again
The Shepherd went about his daily work
With confident and cheerful thoughts ; and now
Sometimes, when he could find a leisure hour,
He to that valley took his way, and there
Wrought at the Sheepfold. Meantime Luke began
To slacken in his duty ; and, at length,
He in the dissolute city gave himself
To evil courses : ignominy and shame
Fell on him, so that he was driven at last
To seek a hiding-place beyond the seas.

440

445

There is a comfort in the strength of love ;
’Twill make a thing endurable which else
Would overset the brain or break the heart :
I have conversed with more than one who well
Remember the old Man, and what he was
Years after he heard this heavy news.
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength. Among the rocks
He went, and still looked up to sun and cloud,
And listened to the wind ; and, as before,
Performed all kinds of labour for his sheep,
And for the land, his small inheritance.
And to that hollow dell from time to time

450

455

460

Did he repair, to build the Fold of which
 His flock had need. 'Tis not forgotten yet
 The pity which was then in every heart
 For the old Man—and 'tis believed by all
 That many and many a day he thither went 465
 And never lifted up a single stone.

There, by the Sheepfold, sometimes was he seen,
 Sitting alone, or with his faithful Dog,
 Then old, beside him, lying at his feet.
 The length of full seven years, from time to time, 470
 He at the building of this Sheepfold wrought,
 And left the work unfinished when he died.
 Three years, or little more, did Isabel
 Survive her Husband: at her death the estate
 Was sold, and went into a stranger's hand. 475
 The Cottage which was named THE EVENING STAR
 Is gone—the ploughshare has been through the ground
 On which it stood; great changes have been wrought
 In all the neighbourhood:—yet the oak is left
 That grew beside their door; and the remains 480
 Of the unfinished Sheepfold may be seen
 Beside the boisterous brook of Greenhead Ghyll.

—1800

TO THE CUCKOO.

O blithe New-comer! I have heard,
 I hear thee and rejoice.
 O Cuckoo! shall I call thee Bird,
 Or but a wandering Voice?

While I am lying on the grass 5
 Thy twofold shout I hear;
 From hill to hill it seems to pass,
 At once far off, and near.

Though babbling only, to the Vale,
Of sunshine and of flowers,
Thou bringest unto me a tale
Of visionary hours.

10

Thrice welcome, darling of the Spring !
Even yet thou art to me
No bird, but an invisible thing,
A voice, a mystery ;

15

The same whom in my school-boy days
I listened to ; that Cry
Which made me look a thousand ways
In bush, and tree, and sky.

20

To seek thee did I often rove
Through woods and on the green ;
And thou wert still a hope, a love ;
Still longed for, never seen.

And I can listen to thee yet ;
Can lie upon the plain
And listen, till I do beget
That golden time again.

25

O blessed Bird ! the earth we pace
Again appears to be
An unsubstantial faery place,
That is fit home for Thee !

30

—1802

TO THE DAISY.

Bright Flower ! whose home is everywhere !
Bold in maternal Nature's care,
And all the long year through the heir
Of joy or sorrow ;

Methinks that there abides in thee
Some concord with humanity,
Given to no other flower I see
The forest thorough !

Is it that Man is soon deprest ?
A thoughtless Thing ! who, once unblest, 10
Does little on his memory rest,
Or on his reason,
And thou would'st teach him how to find
A shelter under every wind,
A hope for times that are unkind 15
And every season ?

Thou wander'st the wide world about,
Unchecked by pride or scrupulous doubt,
With friends to greet thee, or without,
Yet pleased and willing ; 20
Meek, yielding to the occasion's call,
And all things suffering from all,
Thy function apostolical
In peace fulfilling.

—1802.

THE GREEN LINNET.

Beneath these fruit-tree boughs that shed
Their snow-white blossoms on my head,
With brightest sunshine round me spread
Of spring's unclouded weather,
In this sequestered nook how sweet 5
To sit upon my orchard-seat !
And birds and flowers once more to greet,
My last year's friends together.

One have I marked, the happiest guest
In all this covert of the blest :

10

Hail to Thee, far above the rest

In joy of voice and pinion !

Thou, Linnet ! in thy green array
Presiding Spirit here to-day

Dost lead the revels of the May ;

15

And this is thy dominion.

While birds, and butterflies, and flowers,
Make all one band of paramours,
Thou, ranging up and down the bowers,

Art sole in thy employment :

20

A Life, a Presence like the Air,
Scattering thy gladness without care,
To be blest with any one to pair ;

Thyself thy own enjoyment.

Amid yon tuft of hazel trees

25

That twinkle to the gusty breeze,
Behold him perched in ecstasies,

Yet seeming still to hover ;

There ! where the flutter of his wings
Upon his back and body flings
Shadows and sunny glimmerings,

30

That cover him all over.

My dazzled sight he oft deceives,

A Brother of the dancing leaves ;

Then flits, and from the cottage-eaves

35

Pours forth his song in gushes ;

As if by that exulting strain

He mocked and treated with disdain

The voiceless Form he chose to feign,

While fluttering in the bushes.

40

THE SOLITARY REAPER.

Behold her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland Lass !
Reaping and singing by herself ;
Stop here, or gently pass !

Alone she cuts and binds the grain, 5
And sings a melancholy strain ;
Oh listen ! for the Vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No Nightingale did ever chaunt
More welcome notes to weary bands 10
Of travellers in some shady haunt
Among Arabian sands :
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas 15
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings ?—
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago : 20
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day ?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again ?

Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang 25
As if her song could have no ending ;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending ;—
I listened, motionless and still ;
And, as I mounted up the hill, 30
The music in my heart I bore
Long after it was heard no more.

--1803 (7)

“SHE WAS A PHANTOM OF DELIGHT.”

She was a Phantom of delight
 When first she gleamed upon my sight ;
 A lovely Apparition, sent
 To be a moment’s ornament ;
 Her eyes as stars of Twilight fair ; 5
 Like Twilight’s, too, her dusky hair ;
 But all things else about her drawn
 From May-time and the cheerful Dawn ;
 A dancing Shape, an Image gay,
 To haunt, to startle, and way-lay. 10

I saw her upon nearer view,
 A Spirit, yet a Woman too !
 Her household motions light and free,
 And steps of virgin-liberty ;
 A countenance in which did meet 15
 Sweet records, promises as sweet ;
 A Creature not too bright or good
 For human nature’s daily food ;
 For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
 Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles. 20

And now I see with eye serene
 The very pulse of the machine ;
 A Being breathing thoughtful breath,
 A Traveller between life and death ;
 The reason firm, the temperate will, 25
 Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill ;
 A perfect Woman, nobly planned
 To warn, to comfort, and command ;
 And yet a Spirit still, and bright
 With something of angelic light. 30

ODE TO DUTY.

Stern Daughter of the Voice of God !
 O Duty ! if that name thou love
 Who art a light to guide, a rod
 To check the erring, and reprove ;
 Thou who art victory and law
 When empty terrors overawe ;
 From vain temptations dost set free ;
 And calm'st the weary strife of frail humanity !

There are who ask not if thine eye
 Be on them ; who, in love and truth,
 Where no misgiving is, rely
 Upon the genial sense of youth :
 Glad Hearts ! without reproach or blot ;
 Who do thy work, and know it not :
 Oh ! if through confidence misplaced
 They fail, thy saving arms, dread Power ! around them
 cast.

Serene will be our days and bright,
 And happy will our nature be,
 When love is an unerring light,
 And joy its own security.
 And they a blissful course may hold
 Even now, who, not unwisely bold,
 Live in the spirit of this creed ;
 Yet seek thy firm support, according to their need.

I, loving freedom, and untried :
 No sport of every random gust,
 Yet being to myself a guide
 Too blindly have reposed my trust :

And oft, when in my heart was heard
 Thy timely mandate, I deferred
 The task, in smoother walks to stray ;
 But thee I now would serve more strictly, if I may. 30

Through no disturbance of my soul,
 Or strong compunction in me wrought,
 I supplicate for thy control ;
 But in the quietness of thought :
 Me this unchartered freedom tires ;
 I feel the weight of chance-desires ;
 My hopes no more must change their name ;
 I long for a repose that ever is the same. 35

Stern Lawgiver ! yet thou dost wear
 The Godhead's most benignant grace ;
 Nor know we anything so fair
 As is the sunne upon thy face :
 Flowers laugh before thee on their beds
 And fragrance in thy footing treads ;
 Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong ;
 And the most ancient heavens, through Thee, are fresh
 and strong. 45

To humbler functions, awful Power !
 I call thee : I myself command
 Unto thy guidance from this hour ;
 Oh, let my weakness have an end !
 Give unto me, made lowly wise,
 The spirit of self-sacrifice ;
 The confidence of reason give ; 50
 And in the light of truth thy Bondman let me live ! 55

ELEGIAC STANZAS.

SUGGESTED BY A PICTURE OF PEELE CASTLE IN A STORM,
PAINTED BY SIR GEORGE BEAUMONT.

I was thy neighbour once, thou rugged Pile !
Four summer weeks I dwelt in sight of thee :
I saw thee every day ; and all the while
Thy Form was sleeping on a glassy sea.

So pure the sky, so quiet was the air ! 5
So like, so very like, was day to day !
Whene'er I looked, thy Image still was there ;
It trembled, but it never passed away.

How perfect was the calm ! It seemed no sleep ;
No mood, which season takes away, or brings ;
I could have fancied that the mighty Deep
Was even the gentlest of all gentle Things.

Ah ! THEN,—if mine had been the Painter's hand,
To express what then I saw ; and add the gleam,
The light that never was, on sea or land, 15
The consecration, and the Poet's dream ;

I would have planted thee, thou hoary Pile,
Amid a world how different from this !
Beside a sea that could not cease to smile ;
On tranquil land, beneath a sky of bliss. 20

Thou should'st have seemed a treasure-house divine
Of peaceful years ; a chronicle of heaven ;—
Of all the sunbeams that did ever shine
The very sweetest had to thee been given.

A Picture had it been of lasting ease, 25
Elysian quiet, without toil or strife ;
No motion but the moving tide, a breeze,
Or merely silent Nature's breathing life.

Such, in the fond illusion of my heart,
 Such Picture would I at that time have made :
 And seen the soul of truth in every part,
 A stedfast peace that might not be betrayed.

So once it would have been,—'tis so no more ;
 I have submitted to a new control :
 A power is gone, which nothing can restore ;
 A deep distress hath humanized my Soul.

Not for a moment could I now behold
 A smiling sea, and be what I have been :
 The feeling of my loss will ne'er be old ;
 This, which I know, I speak with mind serene.

Then, Beaumont. Friend! who would have been the Friend,
 If he had lived, or Him whom I deplore,
 This work of thine I blame not, but commend ;
 This sea in anger, and that dismal shore.

Oh ! 'tis a passionate work—yet wise and well,
 Well chosen is the spirit that is here ;
 That Hulk which labours in the deadly swell,
 This rueful sky, this pageantry of fear !

And this huge Castle, standing here sublime,
 I love to see the look with which it braves,
 Cased in the unfeeling armour of old time,
 The lightning, the fierce wind, and trampling waves.

Farewell, farewell the heart that lives alone,
 Housed in a dream, at distance from the Kind !
 Such happiness, whenever it be known,
 Is to be pitied ; for 'tis surely blind.

But welcome fortitude, and patient cheer,
 And frequent sights of what is to be borne !
 Such sights or worse, as are before me here.—
 Not without hope we suffer and we mourn.

30

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SEPTEMBER, 1819.

The sylvan slopes with corn-clad fields
 Are hung, as if with golden shields,
 Bright trophies of the sun !
 Like a fair sister of the sky,
 Unruffled doth the blue lake lie,
 The mountains looking on. 5

And, sooth to say, yon vocal grove,
 Albeit uninspired by love,
 By love untaught to ring,
 May well afford to mortal ear 10
 An impulse more profoundly dear
 Than music of the Spring.

For *that* from turbulence and heat
 Proceeds, from some uneasy seat
 In nature's struggling frame, 15
 Some region of impatient life :
 And jealousy, and quivering strife,
 Therein a portion claim.

This, this is holy ;—while I hear
 These vespers of another year, 20
 This hymn of thanks and praise,
 My spirit seems to mount above
 The anxieties of human love,
 And earth's precarious days.

But list !—though winter storms be nigh, 25
 Unchecked is that soft harmony :
 There lives Who can provide
 For all his creatures, and in Him
 Even like the radiant Seraphim,
 These choristers confide. 30

UPON THE SAME OCCASION.

Departing summer hath assumed
 An aspect tenderly illumed,
 The gentlest look of spring ;
 That calls from yonder leafy shade
 Unfaded, yet prepared to fade,
 A timely carolling.

5

No faint and hesitating trill,
 Such tribute as to winter chill
 The lonely redbreast pays !
 Clear, loud, and lively is the din,
 From social warblers gathering in
 Their harvest of sweet lays.

10

Nor doth the example fail to cheer
 Me, conscious that my leaf is sere,
 And yellow on the bough :—
 Fall, rosy garlands, from my head !
 Ye myrtle wreaths, your fragrance shed
 Around a younger brow !

15

Yet will I temperately rejoice ;
 Wide is the range, and free the choice
 Of undiscordant themes ;
 Which, haply, kindred souls may prize
 Not less than vernal ecstasies
 And passion's feverish dreams.

20

For deathless powers to verse belong,
 And they like Demi-gods are strong
 On whom the Muses smile ;
 But some their function have disclaimed,
 Best pleased with what is aptliest framed
 To enervate and defile.

25

30

Not such the initiatory strains
 Committed to the silent plains
In Britain's earliest dawn :
 Trembled the groves, the stars grew pale,
 While all-too-daringly the veil
Of nature was withdrawn !

35

Nor such the spirit-stirring note
 When the live chords Alcæus smote,
 Inflamed by sense of wrong ;
 Woe ! woe to Tyrants ! from the lyre
 Broke threateningly in sparkles dire
 Of fierce vindictive song.

40

And not unhallowed was the page
 By wingèd Love inscribed, to assuage
 The pangs of vain pursuit ;
 Love listening while the Lesbian Maid
 With finest touch of passion swayed
 Her own Æolian lute.

45

O ye, who patiently explore
 The wreck of Herculanean lore,
 What rapture ! could ye seize
 Some Theban fragment, or unroll
 One precious, tender-hearted scroll
 Of pure Simonides.

50

That were, indeed, a genuine birth
 Of poesy ; a bursting forth
 Of genius from the dust :
 What Horace gloried to behold,
 What Maro loved, shall we unfold ?
 Can haughty Time be just !

55

60

TO THE REV. DR. WORDSWORTH.

(WITH THE SONNETS TO THE RIVER DUDDON, AND OTHER
POEMS IN THIS COLLECTION, 1820.)

The Minstrels played their Christmas tune
To-night beneath my cottage-eaves ;
While, smitten by a lofty moon,
The encircling laurels, thick with leaves,
Gave back a rich and dazzling sheen,
That overpowered their natural green. 5

Through hill and valley every breeze
Had sunk to rest with folded wings :
Keen was the air, but could not freeze,
Nor check, the music of the strings ;
So stout and hardy were the band
That scraped the chords with strenuous hand ! 10

And who but listened ?—till was paid
Respect to every Inmate's claim :
The greeting given, the music played,
In honour of each household name,
Duly pronounced with lusty call,
And “Merry Christmas” wished to all ! 15

O Brother ! I revere the choice
That took thee from thy native hills ;
And it is given thee to rejoice :
Though public care full often tills
(Heaven only witness of the toil)
A barren and ungrateful soil. 20

Yet would that Thou, with me and mine,
Hadst heard this never-failing rite ;
And seen on other faces shine 25

A true revival of the light
Which Nature and these rustic Powers,
In simple childhood, spread through ours ! 30

For pleasure hath not ceased to wait
On these expected annual rounds ;
Whether the rich man's sumptuous gate
Call forth the unelaborate sounds,
Or they are offered at the door
That guards the lowliest of the poor.

How touching, when at midnight, sweep
Snow-muffled winds, and all is dark,
To hear—and sink again to sleep !
Or, at an earlier call, to mark,
By blazing fire, the still suspense
Of self-complacent innocence ;

The mutual nod—the grave disguise
Of hearts with gladness brimming o'er ;
And some unbidden tears that rise 45
For names once heard, and heard no more ;
Tears brightened by the serenade
For infant in the cradle laid.

Ah ! not for emerald fields alone,
With ambient streams more pure and bright 50
Than fabled Cytherea's zone
Glittering before the Thunderer's sight,
Is to my heart of hearts endeared
The ground where we were born and reared !

Hail, ancient Manners ! sure defence,
Where they survive, of wholesome laws ;
Remnants of love whose modest sense

Thus into narrow room withdraws ;
 Hail, Usages of pristine mould,
 And ye that guard them Mountains old !

60

Bear with me, Brother : quench the thought
 That slighteth this passion, or condemns ;
 If thee fond Fancy ever brought
 From the proud margin of the Thames,
 And Lambeth's venerable towers,
 To humbler streams and greener bowers.

65

Yes, they can make, who fail to find,
 Short leisure even in busiest days,
 Moments to cast a look behind,
 And profit by those kindly rays
 That through the clouds do sometimes steal,
 And all the far-off past reveal.

70

Hence, while the imperial City's din
 Beats frequent on thy satiate ear,
 A pleased attention I may win
 To agitations less severe,
 That neither overwhelm nor cloy,
 But fill the hollow vale with joy !

75

TO A SKYLARK.

Ethereal minstrel ! pilgrim of the sky !
 Dost thou despise the earth where cares abound ?
 Or, while the wings aspire, are heart and eye
 Both with thy nest upon the dewy ground ?
 Thy nest which thou canst drop into at will,
 Those quivering wings composed, that music still !

5

[To the last point of vision, and beyond,
 Mount, daring warbler ! that love-prompted strain,
 ('Twixt thee and thine a never-failing bond)
 Thrills not the less the bosom of the plain : 10
 Yet might'st thou seem, proud privilege ! to sing
 All independent of the leafy spring.]

Leave to the nightingale her shady wood ;
 A privacy of glorious light is thine ;
 Whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood 15
 Of harmony, with instinct more divine :
 Type of the wise who soar, but never roam ;
 True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home !

—1825

COMPOSED BY THE SEASIDE, NEAR CALAIS,
 AUGUST, 1802.

Fair Star of evening, Splendour of the west,
 Star of my Country !—on the horizon's brink
 Thou hangest, stooping, as might seem, to sink
 On England's bosom ; yet well pleased to rest,
 Meanwhile, and be to her a glorious crest, 5
 Conspicuous to the Nations. Thou, I think,
 Should'st be my Country's emblem ; and should'st wink,
 Bright Star ! with laughter on her banners, drest
 In thy fresh beauty. There ! that dusky spot
 Beneath thee, that is England ; there she lies. 10
 Blessings be on you both ! one hope, one lot,
 One life, one glory !—I, with many a fear
 For my dear Country, many heartfelt sighs,
 Among men who do not love her, linger here.

WRITTEN IN LONDON, SEPTEMBER, 1802.

O Friend ! I know not which way I must look
 For comfort, being, as I am, opprest,
 To think that now our life is only drest
 For show ; mean handy-work of craftsman, cook,
 Or groom ! — We must run glittering like a brook
 In the open sunshine, or we are unblest :
 The wealthiest man among us is the best :
 No grandeur now in nature or in book
 Delights us. Rapine, avarice, expense,
 This is idolatry : and these we adore : 10
 Plain living and high thinking are no more .
 The homely beauty of the good old cause
 Is gone ; our peace, our fearful innocence,
 And pure religion breathing household laws. 5

LONDON, 1802.

Milton ! thou should'st be living at this hour :
 England hath need of thee : she is a fen
 Of stagnant waters : altar, sword, and pen,
 Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
 Have forfeited their ancient English dower 5
 Of inward happiness. We are selfish men ;
 Oh ! raise us up, return to us again ;
 And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
 Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart :
 Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea : 10
 Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
 So didst thou travel on life's common way,
 In cheerful godliness ; and yet thy heart
 The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

"IT IS NOT TO BE THOUGHT OF THAT THE
FLOOD."

It it not to be thought of that the Flood
Of British freedom, which, to the open sea
Of the world's praise, from dark antiquity
Hath flowed, "with pomp of waters, unwithstood," 5
Roused though it be full often to a mood
Which spurns the check of salutary bands,
That this most famous Stream in bogs and sands
Should perish ; and to evil and to good
Be lost forever. In our halls is hung
Armoury of the invincible Knights of old : 10
We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
That Shakespeare spake ; the faith and morals hold
Which Milton held.—In everything we are sprung
Of Earth's first blood, have titles manifold.

—1802

"WHEN I HAVE BORNE IN MEMORY WHAT
HAS TAMED."

When I have borne in memory what has tamed
Great Nations, how ennobling thoughts depart
When men change swords for ledgers, and desert
The student's bower for gold, some fears unnamed
I had, my Country !—am I to be blamed ? 5
Now, when I think of thee, and what thou art,
Verily, in the bottom of my heart,
Of those unfilial fears I am ashamed.
For dearly must we prize thee ; we who find
In thee a bulwark for the cause of men ; 10
And I by my affection was beguiled :
What wonder if a Poet now and then,
Among the many movements of his mind,
Felt for thee as a lover or a child !

—1802

COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE,
SEPT. 3, 1802.

Earth has not anything to show more fair :
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty :
This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning ; silent, bare, 5
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky ;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill ; 10
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep !
The river glideth at his own sweet will :
Dear God ! the very houses seem asleep ;
And all that mighty heart is lying still !

THOUGHT OF A BRITON ON THE SUBJUGATION
OF SWITZERLAND.

Two Voices are there ; one is of the sea,
One of the mountains ; each a mighty Voice :
In both from age to age thou didst rejoice,
They were thy chosen music, Liberty !
There came a Tyrant, and with holy glee 5
Thou fought'st against him ; but hast vainly striven :
Thou from thy Alpine holds at length art driven,
Where not a torrent murmurs heard by thee.
Of one deep bliss thine ear hath been bereft :
Then cleave, O cleave to that which still is left ; 10
For, high-souled Maid, what sorrow would it be
That Mountain floods should thunder as before,
And Ocean bellow from his rocky shore,
And neither awful Voice be heard by thee ! — 1806

TO SLEEP.

A flock of sheep that leisurely pass by,
 One after one ; the sound of rain, and bees
 Murmuring ; the fall of rivers, winds and seas,
 Smooth fields, white sheets of water, and pure sky ;
 I have thought of all by turns, and yet do lie 5
 Sleepless ! and soon the small birds' melodies
 Must hear, first uttered from my orchard trees ;
 And the first cuckoo's melancholy cry.
 Even thus last night, and two nights more, I lay,
 And could not win thee, Sleep ! by any stealth ; 10
 So do not let me wear to-night away :
 Without Thee what is all the morning's wealth ?
 Come, blessed barrier between day and day,
 Dear mother of fresh thoughts and joyous health !

—Before 1807

“BROOK! V. HOSE SOCIETY THE POET SEEKS.”

Brook ! whose society the Poet seeks,
 Intent his wasted spirits to renew ;
 And whom the curious Painter doth pursue
 Through rocky passes, among flowery creeks,
 And tracks thee dancing down thy waterbreaks : 5
 If wish were mine some type of thee to view,
 Thee, and not thee thyself, I would not do
 Like Grecian Artists, give thee human cheeks,
 Channels for tears ; no Naiad should'st thou be,—
 Have neither limbs, feet, feathers, joints nor hairs : 10
 It seems the Eternal Soul is clothed in thee
 With purer robes than those of flesh and blood,
 And hath bestowed on thee a safer good ;
 Unwearied joy, and life without its cares.

INSIDE OF KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL,
CAMBRIDGE.

Tax not the royal Saint with vain expense,
With ill-matched aims the Architect who planned—
Albeit labouring for a scanty band
Of white-robed Scholars only—this immense
And glorious Work of fine intelligence! 5
Give all thou canst; high Heaven rejects the lore
Of nicely-calculated less or more;
So deemed the man who fashioned for the sense
These lofty pillars, spread that branching roof
Self-poised, and scooped into ten thousand cells, 10
Where light and shade repose, where music dwells
Lingering, and wandering on as loth to die;
Like thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof
That they were born for immortality.

—1820-21

THE SAME CONTINUED.

They dreamt not of a perishable home
Who thus could build. Be mine, in hours of fear
Or grovelling thought, to seek a refuge here;
Or through the aisles of Westminster to roam;
Where bubbles burst, and folly's dancing foam 5
Melts, if it cross the threshold; where the wreath
Of awe-struck wisdom droops: or let my path
Lead to that younger Pile, whose sky-like dome
Hath typified by reach of daring art
Infinity's embrace; whose guardian crest, 10
The silent Cross, among the stars shall spread
As now, when She hath also seen her breast
Filled with mementos, satiate with its part
Of grateful England's overflowing Dead.

—1820-21

"SCORN NOT THE SONNET; CRITIC, YOU
HAVE FROWNED."

Scorn not the Sonnet; Critic, you have frowned,
Mindless of its just honours; with this key
Shakespeare unlocked his heart; the melody
Of this small lute gave ease to Petrarch's wound; 5
A thousand times this pipe did Tasso sound;
With it Camöens soothed an exile's grief;
The Sonnet glittered a gay myrtle leaf
Amid the cypress with which Dante crowned
His visionary brow: a glowworm lamp, 10
It cheered mild Spenser, called from Faeryland
To struggle through dark ways; and, when a damp
Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand
The Thing became a trumpet; whence he blew
Soul-animating strains--alas, 'too few!

—Before 1827

NOTES.

NOTES.

COLERIDGE.

COLERIDGE was great both as a poet and as an abstract thinker. His poetical activity is included mainly within the first thirty years of his life, and, as it is with the poet that we are here concerned, his philosophical work and the latter half of his life will here be touched upon very briefly. There is no biography in the annals of English literature that gives the reader a profounder and sadder sense of wasted opportunities and wasted powers than that of Coleridge. His achievement in poetry is exquisite and unique, his criticism more suggestive and inspiring than that of any other English writer, his philosophical thinking had a wide and far-reaching influence, yet we feel all this is but a meagre result in comparison with what his extraordinary intellectual endowments seemed to promise.

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE was born the 21st October, 1772, at Ottery St. Mary, in Devonshire, where his father, the Rev. John Coleridge, was vicar of the parish and master of the Free Grammar School. The father was an interesting man with a lack of fitness for the practical affairs of life, with a love of learning, and a bent towards pedantry—all of which he transmitted to his famous son. A glance in the *Dictionary of National Biography* at the number of descendants of this eccentric parson who have distinguished themselves in various spheres, will amply demonstrate that the poet came of no ordinary stock. Samuel was the youngest of a family of thirteen, and was, in consequence, a spoiled child. “So,” he writes (*Letters I*, p. 11), “I became fretful and timorous, and a tell-tale; and the schoolboys drove me from play, and were always tormenting me, and hence I took no pleasure in boyish sports, but read incessantly. . . . So I became a *dreamer*, and acquired an indisposition to all bodily activity; and I was fretful and inordinately passionate, and, as I could not play at anything, and was slothful, I was despised and hated by the boys; and, because I could read and spell and had, I may truly say, a memory and understanding forced into almost an unnatural ripeness, I was flattered and wondered at by all the old women. And so I became very vain, and despised most of the boys that were at all near my own age, and before I was eight years old I was a *character*. Sensibility,

imagination, vanity, sloth, and feelings of deep and bitter contempt for all who traversed the orbit of my understanding were even then prominent and manifest."

After the sudden death of his father, the boy was sent, in April, 1792, to the famous Blue-coat School, Christ's Hospital. With this event his domestic life seems to have come to an end ; even his holidays were not spent at home. His sensitive and imaginative nature was submitted to the harsh discipline of a great boarding-school, a community of some three hundred boys, situated in the very heart of London.* At school Coleridge formed some warm friendships, the most important and permanent being that with Charles Lamb. He showed himself an apt scholar, and in 1788 was one of those selected by the headmaster to be specially trained for the University Scholarships. As in childhood, so in boyhood, he was precocious and imaginative ; we hear little or nothing of games, but much of poetry and metaphysics. In the latter he was indeed, if we are to trust his own statements, a juvenile prodigy ; and these statements receive confirmation from Lamb : "Come back into memory, like as thou wert in the dayspring of thy fancies, with hope like a fiery column before thee—the dark pillar not yet turned—Samuel Taylor Coleridge—Logician, Metaphysician, Bard !—How have I seen the casual passer through the cloisters stand still, entranced with admiration (while he weighed the disproportion between the *speech* and the *garb* of the young Mirandula), to hear thee unfold in thy deep and sweet intonations the mysteries of Jamblichus, or Plotinus (for even in those years thou waxedst not pale at such philosophic draughts), or reciting Homer in his Greek, or Pindar—while the walls of the old Grey Friars re-echoed to the accents of the *inspired charity boy*."† These "preposterous pursuits" were by no means altogether wholesome either for the boy's mental or moral development, and he narrates how he was rescued from the lassitude in which they left him, through meeting with the poems of a certain Mr. Bowles. These were a very minor outcome of that tide of influence which revolutionized literature in the latter half of the Eighteenth century, and which found more adequate expression in the works of Cowper and Burns—writers who were at this date unknown to Coleridge. What attracted him to the sonnets of Bowles was their emotional quality, their sincerity and directness, and the love for nature

* For light upon the character of his school life see *Biographia Literaria*, Chap. I, the fifth of Coleridge's collected *Letters*, and Lamb's Essays on Christ's Hospital.

† Lamb's *Christ's Hospital Five-and-thirty Years Ago*.

which they displayed, as distinguished from the conventionality and intellectualism that had long been characteristic of English poetry. This discovery so kindled his enthusiasm that, not having money to purchase copies, he made forty transcriptions as presents for his friends. Although he had long been a writer of verses, the work of Bowles stimulated his poetic activity, and from this point we may date the beginning of his poetic career.

Having been successful in winning a scholarship, Coleridge in October, 1791, went into residence at Jesus College, Cambridge. Presently he wins the Browne gold medal for a Greek ode and is a likely candidate for a Craven scholarship. But released from the stricter discipline of school he soon began to exhibit his innate tendency to dissipate his energies, or at least to devote them to anything rather than that which it was his plain duty and interest to do. At the same time his speculative tendencies led him to sympathize with the revolutionary views, in these years rife in France and elsewhere, both in politics and religion. This would not recommend him in the eyes of those in authority. He seems to have fallen into irregular courses ; and in December, 1793, he suddenly left college and enlisted. For this step the main cause was, probably, debts ; a contributory one may have been disappointment in a passion which he had, since Christ's Hospital days, cherished for Mary Evans, the sister of a school-mate. In course of time his whereabouts becoming known to his friends, they bought his discharge ; and in April, 1794, with many expressions of contrition, he resumed his life at college ; but it is little likely that he ever again really settled down to his proper studies. In the following summer, on a visit to Oxford, he became acquainted with Robert Southey ; the two young men had a kindred interest in poetry and in revolutionary ideas ; a warm friendship grew up between them, and Coleridge visited Southey's home at Bristol. In their ardour for social reform they begot a scheme for the regeneration of the world which they called "Pantisocracy." "'Twelve gentlemen of good education and liberal principles are to embark with twelve ladies in April next,' fixing themselves in some delightful part of the new back settlements of America. The labour of each man for two or three hours a day it was imagined would suffice to support the colony. The produce was to be common property, there was to be a good library, and the ample leisure was to be devoted to study, discussion, and the education of the children on a settled system. The women were to be employed in taking care of the infant children and in other suitable occupations, not neglecting the cultivation of their

minds. . . . ‘They calculate that every gentleman providing £125 will be sufficient to carry the scheme into execution.’’’* Various young enthusiasts were found who professed themselves willing to embark in this undertaking. The necessary funds Coleridge proposed to furnish from the proceeds of literary work, and meanwhile he secured the requisite female companion by becoming engaged to Miss Sarah Fricker, whose sister was betrothed to Southey. This step he took, although during the summer he had suffered keenly from his first passion, which by an accidental encounter with Mary Evans had been kindled into new violence. Such schemes as these were not likely to conduce to regular academic work; and in December he finally left the university without taking his degree. About the same time a report of Miss Evans’ approaching marriage awakened the old feelings in all their strength. We find him in London forgetful of the practical issues of life, and of his engagement to Miss Fricker, writing sonnets† on distinguished personages for the *Morning Chronicle*, and solacing himself with the companionship of Lamb. This condition of things was brought to an end by the energetic Southey, who came in person to London and carried Coleridge back to Bristol—to Pantisocracy and Miss Fricker.

With his residence in Bristol, Coleridge’s mature life begins. He was profoundly interested now, as always, in great public questions, and proposed to disseminate his ideas and win a livelihood by lectures and by writing. His portrait is outlined (probably with sufficient truth) by a lady who met him at this time: “A young man of brilliant understanding, great eloquence, desperate fortune, democratic principles, and entirely led away by the feelings of the moment.” Having quarrelled with Southey (with whom he lodged) because of Southey’s desertion of Pantisocracy, and having been promised by a Bristol bookseller, Cottle, a guinea-and-a-half for every one hundred lines of his poetry, he, in October, 1795, married Miss Sarah Fricker. The wedded pair established themselves at Clevedon, in the neighbourhood of Bristol, in a cottage commemorated in the poem entitled *The Eolian Harp*. His married life was, at the outset, happy; Coleridge was conscious of his powers, and this consciousness may well have been strengthened by the impression which he produced upon nearly all who met him—an impression largely due to the suggestiveness and eloquence of his conversation. He was overflowing with hope and with visionary projects, and the world seemed full of promise. Cottle was bringing

* Dykes Campbell’s summary of Poole’s account of the scheme.

† For an example, see the lines to La Fayette in the Appendix to this volume.

out a collection of his poems (published April, 1796); but to provide a steady source of income he started a periodical entitled *The Watchman*. To this latter scheme Coleridge's dilatoriness and unbusiness-like habits, in two months and a half, proved fatal. Some friends, with the wealthy tanner Poole at their head, presented a considerable sum of money to tide the poet over his financial difficulties. After abandoning various plans,—for going to London as an editor, for teaching, etc.,—Coleridge, at length, on the last day of 1796, took up his abode in a small cottage at Nether Stowey that he might be near his friend Poole, and that he might carry into effect his latest dream of making a livelihood from literature and agriculture combined. “*My farm* will be a garden of one acre and a half, in which I mean to raise vegetables and corn enough for myself and wife, and feed a couple of snouted and grunting cousins from the refuse. My evenings I shall devote to literature; and, by reviews, the magazine, and other shilling-scavenger employments, shall probably gain forty pounds a year; which economy and self-denial, gold-beaters, shall hammer till it covers my annual expenses.” Thus began the happiest and by far the most fruitful period in Coleridge’s life. A large element in its happiness and the main stimulus to its fruitfulness was companionship with William and Dorothy Wordsworth. The two young poets had already met, but a visit to the Wordsworths in June, 1797, was the beginning of close intimacy. They were drawn together by similar pursuits, hopes, feelings, and ideas. Coleridge was employed upon a tragedy, *Osorio*, Wordsworth upon another, *The Borderers*. Coleridge writes that he feels himself a “little man” by Wordsworth’s side, and thinks his friend the greatest man he ever knew. The impression on the other side is recorded in Dorothy Wordsworth’s Journal: “He [Coleridge] is a wonderful man. His conversation teems with soul, mind, and spirit. Then he is so benevolent, so good-tempered and cheerful, and, like William, interests himself so much about every little trifle. At first I thought him very plain, that is, for about three minutes: he is pale, thin, has a wide mouth, thick lips, and not very good teeth, longish, loose-growing, half-curling, rough black hair. But, if you hear him speak for five minutes, you think no more of them. His eye is large and full, and not very dark, but grey—such an eye as would receive from a heavy soul the dullest expression; but it speaks every emotion of his animated mind; it has more of the ‘poet’s eye in fine frenzy rolling’ than I ever witnessed. He has fine dark eyebrows, and an overhanging forehead.” We may add to this, a description of himself which Coleridge had sent to a correspondent not many months earlier: “As to my shape, ’tis good enough if measured, but

my gait is awkward, and the walk of the whole man indicates *indolence capable of energies*. I am, and ever have been, a great reader, and have read almost everything—a library cormorant. I am *deep* in all out-of-the-way books, whether of the monkish times, or of the puritanical era. I have read and digested most of the historical writers ; but I do not like history. Metaphysics and poetry, and ‘facts of mind,’ that is, accounts of all the strange phantoms that ever possessed ‘your philosophy’ dreamers, from Thoth the Egyptian to Taylor the English pagan, are my darling studies. In short, I seldom read except to amuse myself, and I am almost always reading. Of useful knowledge, I am a so-so chemist, and I love chemistry. All else is *blank*; but I *will* be (please God) a horticulturist and a farmer. I compose very little, and I absolutely hate composition, and such is my dislike that even a sense of duty is too weak to overpower it. . . . In conversation I am impassioned, and oppose what I deem error with an eagerness which is often mistaken for personal asperity ; but I am ever so swallowed up in the *thing* that I perfectly forget my opponent.”

In the course of the summer, Coleridge’s visit was returned ; and in August the Wordsworths were successful in renting a country house at Alfoxden, among the Quantock Hills, and only three miles from Nether Stowey. The friends were almost daily together. The result upon Coleridge was not merely to stimulate his poetic power but to give a new character to his poetry, especially in its use of, and attitude towards, nature. Almost all Coleridge’s best work in poetry was written in this and the following year, e.g. : *The Ancient Mariner*, the first part of *Christabel*, *This Lime-tree Bower my Prison*, *The Nightingale*, *Ode to France*, *Kubla Khan*, *Frost at Midnight*, etc.

Meanwhile Coleridge’s pecuniary difficulties continued to harass him. He had some thoughts of taking charge of a Unitarian congregation, when the two brothers Wedgwood, sons of the famous potter, unsolicited, offered him an annuity of £150 for life without conditions, with the purpose of enabling him to devote himself exclusively to his literary and philosophical work. Thus released at least from immediate financial pressure, Coleridge in company with Wordsworth and Dorothy set out for study in Germany, September, 1798. In the same month the *Lyrical Ballads* was published ; though one of the most notable volumes in the development of English poetry, it attracted no great attention. The poems by Coleridge which it contained were *The Ancient Mariner*, *The Nightingale*, *The Foster Mother’s Tale* and *The Dungeon* ; Wordsworth’s contributions were much more numerous and occupied something like two-thirds of the book.

In Germany Coleridge and the Wordsworths separated, and the former during the nine months of his sojourn devoted himself to gaining familiarity with the language, literature, and people of the country. Some years later he became a diligent student of the latest developments of its philosophy. He thus prepared himself for one of his distinctive services—that of being a pioneer in the work of introducing German literature, and German critical and philosophical tendencies and ideas into the intellectual life of England.

At his return home in the summer of 1799 Coleridge had not attained his twenty-seventh year, yet already his poetic activity was nearly at an end and his best days were behind him. The weaknesses which were to prove disastrous had already won an ascendancy over him:—dilatoriness, visionariness, inability to settle down to any one task, or to persist in any fixed course of life. His energies were wasted in sketching plausible and magnificent designs which he lacked continuity of purpose to complete. What he did subsequently achieve, was mostly work written for the moment under the pressure of pecuniary need, or hastily and imperfectly finished because procrastinated to the last moment. We can only in the briefest fashion outline these thirty-five years of weakness and misery, of broken purposes and fragmentary accomplishment.

After his arrival in England he occupied himself with newspaper work in London, and with making a poetical version of Schiller's *Wallenstein*, pronounced to be one of the best translations in the language and superior even to the original. Abandoning, in a few months, his connections with the press, he settled in the summer of 1800 at Keswick, in the Lake country, that he might be near Wordsworth. His health, which had never been good, began to be seriously impaired; he suffered intensely from rheumatic pains; and in order to get relief resorted to laudanum, of which he had probably made dangerously free use for some years back. The natural result followed; before 1803 he had become a slave of opium. The physical and mental effects of this indulgence rapidly intensified the natural weaknesses of his character. To the other troubles, domestic infelicity was soon added. Coleridge and his wife lacked common tastes, interests and sympathies; on her side there are said to have been faults of temper; that on his side he might give cause for such faults, is sufficiently apparent. Though a deeply affectionate father, home became more and more distasteful to him. Of his own weakness, of the frittering away of his powers and time, he was fully conscious. A profound discouragement over-

whelmed him ; his letters have the tone of premature old age. His state of mind is depicted with extraordinary power in the latest of his great poetic achievements, the *Ode on Desjection*, written April 4th, 1802. "No sadder cry from the depths;" writes Mr. Dykes Campbell, "was ever uttered even by Coleridge, none more sincere, none more musical. He felt that poetically he was dead, and that if not dead spiritually, he had lost his spiritual identity." In 1803 he began a trip through Scotland in company with William and Dorothy Wordsworth. But the companionship even of these, his dearest friends, was in his morbid state unendurable to him ; he quitted them and completed the journey on foot and alone. With the idea that he might be benefited by a warmer climate he sailed to Malta in the spring of 1804. There and in Italy he remained for some two years, and won, as elsewhere and always, warm friends. Though during some months he acted as secretary to the Governor of Malta, his morbid mental and physical condition is abundantly manifest in his correspondence. In August, 1806, he landed in England, as he writes, "ill, penniless and worse than homeless." For some time he neither returned home nor communicated with his family.

It 1808 he carried out a plan which had long been in his mind of giving a course of lectures in London on Shakespeare and Milton ; and subsequently in various years similar courses were given. The lectures inevitably suffered under the usual drawbacks ; their preparation was either delayed to the last moment, or, sometimes, altogether omitted. Being unwritten, they were dependent on the circumstances of the moment, were more or less desultory, and varied between excellence and positive dulness. Yet little justice as he did to himself in these lectures, the inadequate short-hand reports of such as have been preserved, suffice to show (in the words of Mr. Campbell) "that Coleridge's audiences probably heard the finest literary criticism which has ever been given in English."

At times there were intervals of amendment in Coleridge's mental and physical condition, and in one of these periods, in 1808, he began the publication of a periodical entitled *The Friend*, which, of course, was a failure. In 1810, through certain misunderstandings, Coleridge lost what was one of the chief of his few remaining sources of happiness and satisfaction, the friendship of the Wordsworths. From this date to the year 1816 extends the darkest period of his life. Nearly all his old friends were alienated ; he was involved in debt ; his sources of income were most precarious—writing for the daily press, lecturing,

and the gifts of those who admired or loved him. In 1812 Josiah Wedgwood withdrew his half of the annuity which had been granted in 1798; the other half had been secured to Coleridge on the death of Thomas Wedgwood some years before. This part of his income Cole-ridge had all along devoted to the maintenance of his wife and family. A transient gleam of prosperity fell upon his path in the same year when his drama entitled *Remorse* (in reality the old play of *Osorio* rewritten), put upon the stage through the good offices of Byron, proved a decided success, and brought upwards of £400 to the author.

De Quincey, who himself bestowed an anonymous gift of £300 upon Coleridge, has said: "Beyond all men who ever perhaps have lived, [Coleridge] found means to engage a constant succession of most faithful friends. He received the services of sisters, brothers, daughters, sons, from the hands of strangers attracted to him by no possible impulses but those of reverence for his intellect and love for his gracious nature. Perpetual relays were laid along his path of life of zealous and judicious supporters." So it was now; if old friends were alienated, others took their place. With special devotion did a certain Mr. and Mrs. Morgan tend him during this melancholy time; with them he lived almost continuously from 1810 to 1816; his own home he did not even visit during the last twenty-two years of his life. Amidst so many causes for depression, the chief cause of all, the opium habit, gained an even greater ascendancy. To the misery which this slavery caused, he gives expression in a letter to Cottle, dated April 26th, 1814: "For ten years the anguish of my spirit has been indescribable, the sense of my danger staring, but the consciousness of my GUILT worse, far worse than all. I have prayed with drops of agony on my brow, trembling not only before the justice of my Maker, but even before the mercy of my Redeemer. 'I gave thee so many talents, what hast thou done with them?' . . . Had I but a few hundred pounds, but £200—half to send to Mrs. Coleridge, and half to place myself in a private madhouse where I could procure nothing but what a physician thought proper, and where a medical attendant could be constantly with me for two or three months (in less than that time life or death would be determined), there might be hope. Now there is none! O God! how willingly would I place myself under Dr. Fox, in his establishment; for my case is a species of madness, only that it is a derangement, an utter impotence of the volition and not of the intellectual faculties. You bid me rouse myself; go bid a man paralytic in both arms to rub them briskly

together and that will cure them. ‘Alas,’ he would reply, ‘that I cannot move my arms is my complaint and my misery.’” The plan indicated in this extract Coleridge did have the strength of will to carry out in April, 1816. By the advice of a distinguished medical authority he put himself under the care and control of Mr. James Gillman, a surgeon of Highgate. Beneath this physician’s roof he spent the remaining eighteen years of his life—broken in health, with a certain weakness of volition, with a dreaminess and vagueness in his processes of thought which precluded him from attaining the best results from his intellectual work, yet in comparative and increasing placidity,—busy after his own fashion, producing a certain number of books, and exercising a greater influence, perhaps, by his extraordinary talk, which attracted to him many thoughtful men, especially of the younger generations. His chief publications of these later years were, in 1817, a collected edition of his poems entitled *Sibylline Leaves*, and his *Biographia Literaria*, the most interesting of his prose writings, though desultory and uneven; the *Aids to Reflection* (1825) which is one of the main sources of the Broad Church development in the Church of England; and *On the Constitution in Church and State*, which is said to have been a factor in the High Church movement. As the last two works indicate, his later interest was largely centred on religious questions; he had long ceased to be a Unitarian and become a strong adherent and apologist of the national church. Moreover, he believed himself in possession of an original and far-reaching philosophical system which he was forever striving to embody in what was to be his *magnum opus*; but it is probably, here as elsewhere, he mistook vague and disjointed visions for a perfected system. In his later years, pleasant relations were resumed with the members of his own family and with the Wordsworths. In July 1834 his life found a peaceful and not unwelcome close. “A brief dawn of unsurpassed promise and achievement (Mr. Dykes Campbell thus sums up); ‘a trouble’ as of ‘clouds and weeping rain’; then a long summer evening’s work done by ‘the setting sun’s pathetic light’—such was Coleridge’s day.”

THE ANCIENT MARINER.

Text.—First published anonymously in *Lyrical Ballads*, September, 1798; various changes were made in the text of this poem in the second edition (1800) of the *Lyrical Ballads*; and again when it was for the first time published among Coleridge’s own poems in *Sibylline Leaves*.

Composition.—Wordsworth, in 1843, dictated to Miss Fenwick the following account of the origin of this poem : “ In the autumn of 1797 he [Coleridge], my sister, and myself started from Alfoxden pretty late in the afternoon, with a view to visit Linton and the Valley of Stones near to it ; and, as our united funds were very small, we agreed to pay the expense of the tour by writing a poem, to be sent to the ‘ New Monthly Magazine,’ set up by Phillips the bookseller, and edited by Dr. Aikin. Accordingly we set off, and proceeded along the Quantock Hills towards Watchet ; and in the course of this walk was planned the poem of the *Ancient Mariner*, founded on a dream, as Mr. Coleridge said, of his friend Mr. Cruikshank. Much the greatest part of the story was Mr. Coleridge’s invention ; but certain parts I myself suggested ; for example, some crime was to be committed which should bring upon the Old Navigator, as Coleridge afterwards delighted to call him, the spectral persecution, as a consequence of that crime, and his own wanderings. I had been reading in Shelvock’s Voyages, a day or two before, that, while doubling Cape Horn, they frequently saw albatrosses in that latitude, the largest sort of sea-fowl, some extending their wings twelve or thirteen feet : ‘ Suppose,’ said I, ‘ you represent him as having killed one of these birds on entering the South Sea, and that the tutelary spirits of these regions take upon them to avenge the crime.’ The incident was thought fit for the purpose, and adopted accordingly. I also suggested the navigation of the ship by the dead men, but do not recollect that I had anything more to do with the scheme of the poem. The gloss with which it was subsequently accompanied was not thought of by either of us at the time, at least not a hint of it was given to me, and I have no doubt it was a gratuitous after-thought. We began the composition together, on that to me memorable evening. I furnished two or three lines at the beginning of the poem, in particular :

‘ And listen’d like a three years’ child,
The Mariner had his will.’

These trifling contributions all but one, which Mr. C. has with unnecessary scrupulosity recorded, slipped out of his mind, as they well might. As we endeavoured to proceed conjointly (I speak of the same evening), our respective manners proved so widely different, that it would have been quite presumptuous in me to do anything but separate from an undertaking upon which I could only have been a clog.” Such are the concrete facts ; in his *Biographia Literaria*, chap. xiv, Coleridge, characteristically, gives the philosophical side of the inception of

the poem :—“ During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbours, our conversations turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of Nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of the imagination. The sudden charm, which accidents of light and shade, which moonlight or sunset, diffused over a known and familiar landscape, appeared to represent the practicability of combining both. These are the poetry of Nature. The thought suggested itself (to which of us I do not recollect) that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the one, the incidents and the agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural ; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. And real in this sense they have been to every human being who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency. For the second class subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life ; the characters and incidents were to be such as will be found in every village and its vicinity where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them when they present themselves.

“ In this idea originated the plan of the *Lyrical Ballads*, in which it was agreed that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic ; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith. Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind’s attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us ; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which, in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude, we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand.”

In Dorothy Wordsworth’s Journal (p. 14) it is stated that Coleridge ‘brought his ballad [*The Ancient Mariner*] finished’ on March 23rd, 1798.

Sources.—The beauty and power of *The Ancient Mariner* are wholly due to Coleridge himself, but it is not uninteresting to note where he got suggestions for the material which he has so exquisitely woven into a

unity. If we can trust Wordsworth's memory, the germ was a dream of a neighbour, Mr. Cruikshank. The idea of the albatross was suggested by Wordsworth from Shelvocke's *Voyages* (see extract from this book on note to l. 63 below); this fact is emphasized in a statement made to the Rev. A. Dyce : [The idea of] "shooting an albatross was mine ; for I had been reading Shelvocke's *Voyages*, which probably Coleridge never saw." It is probable that Coleridge obtained various hints from another account of a voyage by a certain Captain Thomas James which was published in 1633 : *Strange and Dangerous Voyage . . . in his intended Discovery of the North-West Passage into the South Sea*. The following passages from this book are quoted in Mr. Dykes Campbell's notes as most likely to have given suggestions to the poet : 'All day and night, it snowed hard' (p. 11) ; 'The nights are very cold, so that our rigging freezes' (p. 15) ; 'It proved very thicke foule weather, and the next day by two a Clocke in the morning we found ourselves incompassed about with Ice' (p. 6) ; 'We had Ice not farre off about us, and some pieces as high as our Top-mast-head' (p. 7) ; 'We heard . . . the butt against a banke of Ice that lay on the shoare. It made a hollow and hideous noyse, like an over-fall of water, which made us reason among ourselves concerning it, for we were not able to see about us, it being darke night and foggie' (p. 8) ; 'The Ice . . . crackt all over the Bay, with a fearfull noyse' (p. 77). Finally, in a letter of a certain Paulinus, Bishop of Nola in the Fourth century (which it is quite possible Coleridge may have read), there is a narrative of a shipwreck of which an old man is the sole survivor ; the ship was navigated by a crew of angels to the Lucanian shore, where the fishermen, taking the angels for soldiers, ran away from the ship until recalled by the old man, who showed them he was alone. So much for the material ; the form and general conception of the poem were derived from the old ballads familiar to Coleridge in the collection which had been published by Bishop Percy in 1765, entitled *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*.

Ancient is used sometimes in the sense of 'aged,' e.g., Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, IV, iv, 76 : "The year growing ancient ;" the word as used here is doubtless also intended (as Dr. Sykes notes in his edition of this poem) to suggest not merely that the Mariner was aged, but also that he belonged to the olden times.

The **Gloss** in the margin should not be overlooked ; it sometimes throws light upon the narrative and is, as Pater says, "a composition of quite a different shade of beauty and merit from that of the verse which it accompanies, connecting this, the chief poem of Coleridge, with

his philosophy, and emphasizing in it that psychological element of which I have spoken, its curious soul-lore."

1. The opening is in the manner of several ancient ballads, e.g., *The Friar of Orders Gray* (Percy's *Reliques*) :

It was a friar of orders gray
Walkt forth to tell his beades.

3. Strange oaths are characteristic of mediæval times ; in the *Tale of Gamelyn*, formerly ascribed to Chaucer, the porter swears " by Goddes berde " ; that swearing by the beard was not uncommon, seems to be indicated by Touchstone's words to the ladies in *As You Like It*, I, ii ;

Swear by your beards that I am a knave.

11. **loon.** 'A base fellow' ; cf. *Macbeth*, V, iii, "The devil damn thee black, thou cream-faced loon."*

12. **eftsoons.** 'Forthwith' ; an obsolete word which gives a poetic flavour.

46. **who** was originally an interrogative, but is found as an indefinite in later English ; " Who steals my purse, steals trash," *Othello*, III, iii ; " And I will set this foot of mine as far As who goes farthest," *Julius Caesar*, I, iii.

47. **still.** 'Continually,' 'ever' ; cf. *Tempest*, I, ii, "The still-vexed Bermoothes."

55. **clifts.** 'Cliffs.' The *New English Dictionary* quotes this passage under the head of 'clift' a form of 'cleft' a fissure ; but the same authority states that 'clift' is also a by-form of 'cliff' due to confusion between that word and 'clift' a fissure, and is commonly found from 16th to the 18th century ; it quotes from Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and *Robinson Crusoe*, I, iii. See also *Isaiah*, lvii, 5 : " Slaying the children in the valleys under clifts of the rocks."

ken. Usually 'know,' but here 'perceive.'

swound. Archaic and provincial for 'swoon.'

63. **Albatross.** " The common albatross is the largest of web-footed birds, measuring four feet in length and ten to seventeen feet in spread of wings. It is often seen at a great distance from land, and abounds in the southern seas ; often approaches very near vessels and follows for a considerable time." (*Chamber's Encyclopaedia*.) The use which the poet makes of the bird was probably suggested by a passage in Shelvoke's *Voyage round the World* : " One would think it impossible that anything living could subsist in so rigid a climate [neighbourhood of Cape

Horn]; and indeed, we all observed, that we had not the sight of one fish since we were come to the Southward of the streights of *le Mair*, not one sea-bird, except a disconsolate black *Albitross*, who accompanied us for several days, hovering about us as if lost himself, till Hatley (my second Captain) observing, in one of his melancholy fits, that the bird was always hovering near us, imagined from his colour that it might be some ill omen. That which, I suppose, induced him the more to encourage his superstition was the continued series of contrary, tempestuous winds which had oppressed us ever since we had got into this sea. But be that as it would, after some fruitless attempts, at length, shot the *Albitross*, not doubting (perhaps) that we should have a fair wind after it."

64. **Thorough** and ‘through’ are variants of the same word and originally employed indifferently, but in course of time each has been assigned a function of its own.

69. **thunder-fit.** “Fit,” a paroxysm in a disease, hence transferred (as here) to any sudden, violent and transitory activity.

76. **vespers.** Commonly “evening prayers” (cf. ll. 595-6 of this poem), but here in its etymological sense ‘evenings.’

PART II.

91. The use of ‘and’ at the beginning of sentences, and its frequent repetition are characteristic of the old ballads, as of all simple and naïve writing ; cf. children’s compositions.

92. **’em.** ‘Hem,’ originally dative plural of the third personal pronoun of which ‘the,’ ‘his,’ ‘her,’ and ‘it’ are survivals.

111. **All.** An intensive adverb to the phrase which follows ; cf. Gay’s *Black-eyed Susan*, “All in the Downs the fleet was moored.”

127. **rout.** A company or troop, with the associated idea, perhaps, of tumult and disorder.

128. **death-fires.** Luminous appearances supposed to be seen above dead bodies.

133. **gloss.** The references to authorities are inserted to give a mediæval colour. *Josephus*, the well-known Jewish historian (lived in the first century A. D.), does not specially treat of spirits or angels, but *Michael Psellus*, a philosopher of Constantinople who lived in the 11th century, wrote concerning spirits in his *περὶ ἐνεργειῶν δαιμόνων διάλογος*.

139. well a-day. Supposed corruption of the old interjection “Wel-away” which, in turn, comes from “wā lā wā,” i.e., woe lo woe; common in earlier literature.

For nowe is my dear husband slayne,
Alas! and wel-a-way!

PART III.

152. I wist. This phrase has probably arisen from confusion of the old adverb ‘gewiss,’ later form ‘ywiss’ or ‘i-wiss,’ meaning ‘certainly,’ with the verb ‘witan’ to know, present tense ‘wat,’ preterit ‘wiste.’

164. Gramercy in accordance with its etymology (O. Fr. *grant merci*, great thanks) means ‘thanks,’ and in this sense is common in old ballads.

In regard to the use which Coleridge makes of it in the text (as an exclamation = ‘mercy on us’) the *New English Dictionary* says: “Johnson, 1755, who regards this word as a shortened form of *grant me mercy* gives this as the only application of the word; but both his examples belong to the sense [‘thanks’].” The *Dictionary* states that (while there are one or two cases which might seem to show that the word was actually used as Johnson says) the later cases (in Coleridge, Scott, etc.) may be merely based on Johnson’s interpretation.

164. they for joy did grin. “I took the thought of ‘grinning for joy’ from my companion’s remark to me, when we had climbed to the top of Plinlimmon, and were nearly dead with thirst. We could not speak, from the constriction, till we found a little puddle under a stone. He said to me ‘You grinned like a idiot!’ He had done the same.” (*Coleridge’s Table Talk, May 31st, 1830.*)

167. fol.; cf. Scott, *Rokeby* II, xi :

that Phantom Ship whose form
Shoots like a meteor through the storm.

In his note Scott says that this is an allusion to “a well known nautical superstition.” For literary use of the same idea cf. Marryat’s novel *The Phantom Ship* and Longfellow’s *Ballad of Carmilhan (Tales of a Wayside Inn)*.

184. gossameres. Filmy substances spun by small spiders floating in the air or spread over a grassy surface. According to the *New English Dictionary* the etymology is ‘goose summer,’ possibly meaning later summer when the geese fly, during which time their films are most abundant.

188. **a Death.** An embodiment of death in the form of a skeleton ; cf. *Merchant of Venice*, II, viii, 63 :

What have we here ?
A carrion death within whose empty eye
There is a written scroll.

193. **Night-mare** is originally a spirit that oppresses people in sleep.

198. Sailors have superstitions in regard to whistling, as is shown by the well-known recipe of whistling in order to bring a wind.

210-212. "It is a common superstition among sailors that something evil is about to happen whenever a star dogs the moon." (*Coleridge's MS. Note.*) But of course a star is never seen *within* the tip of the moon.

PART IV.

226-227. "For the last two lines of this stanza I am indebted to Mr. Wordsworth. It was on a delightful walk from Nether Stowey to Dulverton, with him and his sister, in the autumn of 1797, that this poem was planned, and in part composed." (*Coleridge's note in the edition of 1817.*)

245. **or ever.** 'Or' is often used in earlier English where we would employ 'before.'

254. **reek.** Properly to emit vapour ; the reference here is rather to smell.

274, fol. The reference is to the familiar phenomenon of phosphorescence on the sea caused by the presence of minute organisms. Any one who has crossed the ocean has observed the streams of light that break away from the sides of the vessel as she strikes the waves ; the water-snakes are represented as producing a similar effect.

288-291. *Part IV*, the central portion of the poem, contains the catastrophe, or turning point, of the story ; this is made to depend on a moral change wrought in the heart of the hero, and this change is represented (in harmony with ideas very prominent in Wordsworth's teaching) as being brought about by the contemplation of the beauty of nature (cf. the gloss at l. 263).

289. **so free.** A species of phraseology very common in ballads : cf. *Adam Bell (Percy's Reliques)*, ll. 97-8 :

Then spake good Adam Bell
To Clym of the Clough so free.

PART V.

292. **silly.** The word meant originally ‘happy,’ ‘blessed,’ then ‘simple,’ hence ‘foolish.’ Some editors consider it has its original sense here; but, more probably, there is a reference to the uselessness and absurdity of buckets under the conditions described.

314. **sheen.** Coleridge has already (l. 56) employed this word as a noun. It is much more commonly an adjective, as here.

fire-flags. This is usually interpreted ‘flashes of lightning,’ but ‘fire-flag’ seems a very inappropriate representation of a lightning flash. The *New English Dictionary* gives the meaning “a meteoric flame,” and quotes this passage; but to the present writer it seems much more likely that the reference is to electric phenomena. At the South pole, as at the North, the aurora appears and the word *fire-flags*, as well as the whole description in this stanza, is much more appropriately applied to this than to either of the other appearances. In the article in *Chamber's Encyclopædia* on the aurora, it is said: “The ray seldom keeps the same form for any length of time; but undergoes continual changes, moving eastward and westward, and *fluttering like a ribbon agitated by the wind*.”

337. **'gan.** The word, which is common in early poetry, has been erroneously supposed to be an abbreviation of ‘began,’ hence the apostrophe.

362. **jargoning.** ‘Jargon’ in modern usage indicates confused sounds without any suggestion of beauty, but in earlier English it was applied specially to the chattering of birds.

383. The spirit from the South pole, which in obedience to the heavenly powers had been moving the ship northward, cannot pass the equator; so that the sun, which at this point is directly overhead seems to fix the ship to the spot.

399. In imitation of the old ballads; cf. *Adam Bell*, Pt. II, ll. 29-30:

“Here commeth none in,” sayed the porter,
“By Hym that dyed on a tre.”

407. **honey-dew.** A sugary substance found on leaves in drops like dew; but it is not so much the thing itself as the suggestiveness of its name which leads the poet to allude to it here.

PART VI.

435. **charnel-dungeon.** A ‘charnel’ is a receptacle for dead bodies (L. *caro, carnis*).

455. Cf. Tennyson's *The Lady of Shalott*:

Little breezes dusk and shiver.

The darkening of water by the breaking of the reflection through a ripple on the surface is an everyday phenomenon.

467. **countree.** The accentuation of the last syllable is archaic (cf. French *contrée*).

473. **strewn.** "Outspread" (*Sykes*), perhaps rather "spread evenly with level light" (*Bates*).

480, fol. The mariner is looking out on the water, and sees the reflections first; then he turns and sees the spirits themselves on the deck.

489. **rood.** 'Cross'; common in earlier English.

490. **a seraph-man.** Seraphim are represented in *Isaiah*, vi, as standing beside the throne of God. Later writers, and Milton following them, apply the name to the highest order of angels; etymologically the word was thought to be connected with the idea of fire.

512. **shrieve.** An old form of 'shrive,' to confess, absolve, and impose penance.

PART VII.

517. **marineres.** In the edition of 1798 the word was spelt thus throughout; abandoned as other needless archaisms in the later editions, it is here retained on account of the rhyme.

524. **I trow.** I think; a very common phrase in earlier English.

535. **ivy-tod.** "Tod" is a bush usually of ivy.

540. **a-feared.** Now a colloquialism and vulgarism, but good archaic English. Very common in Shakespeare, e.g., *Macbeth*, V, i, 41: "A soldier and afeared!"

552-553. Owing to the formation of gases through decomposition, the body of one drowned is likely after some lapse of time to rise to the surface.

570. **all.** See note on l. 111.

577. Biblical phraseology; cf. *Matthew*, viii, 27; "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?"

585. Cf. *Luke*, xxiv, 32: "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way?"

590. **I teach.** Simply 'I tell.'

WORDSWORTH.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH was of Yorkshire lineage ; he himself tells us that the Wordsworths "had been settled at Peniston in Yorkshire, near the sources of the Don, probably before the Norman Conquest." For many generations at least his paternal ancestors had dwelt there as yeomen, or small landed proprietors. On his mother's side he was descended from an old Westmoreland family. His northern origin showed itself very clearly both in his physical and mental frame. On these were strongly stamped many of the well-defined peculiarities associated with that sturdy and sterling race, doubtless largely Norse in origin, which inhabits the northern counties of England and the Lowlands of Scotland. As the life of his ancestors, so was his own individual life closely bound up with the northern shires to which he belonged, and more especially with that part of them known as the Lake District. This covers an area of some 30 by 25 miles, and includes within its limits sixteen lakes, tarns and streams innumerable, sea coast, river estuaries, and mountains rising to the height of 3000 feet. Here graceful beauty and wild, rugged grandeur are closely intermingled. "Indeed, nowhere else in the world, perhaps, is so much varied beauty to be found in so narrow a space." In Wordsworth's time it was scarcely less exceptional in the character of its inhabitants. "Drawn in great part from the strong Scandinavian stock, they dwell in a land solemn and beautiful as Norway itself, but without Norway's rigour and penury, and with lakes and happy rivers instead of Norway's inarming melancholy sea. They are a mountain folk ; but their mountains are no precipices of insuperable snow, such as keep the dwellers of some Swiss hamlet shut in ignorance and stagnating into idiocy. These barriers divide only to concentrate, and environ only to endear ; their guardianship is but enough to give an added unity to each group of kindred homes. And thus it is that the Cumbrian dalesmen have afforded perhaps as near a realization as human fates have yet allowed of the rural society which statesmen desire for their country's greatness. They have given an example of substantial comfort strenuously won ; of home affections intensified by independent strength ; of isolation without ignorance, and of a shrewd simplicity ; of an hereditary virtue which needs no support from fanaticism, and to which honour is more than law." (Myers' *Wordsworth*.)

On the northern borders of this district, at Cockermouth, Cumberland, William Wordsworth was born April 7th, 1770. His grandfather had been the first of the race to leave Yorkshire and buy for himself a

small estate in Westmoreland. The poet's father was an attorney and law-agent to Sir James Lowther, afterwards Earl of Lonsdale. In 1778 the poet's mother died, and William, along with an elder brother, was sent to the ancient Grammar School of Hawkeshead, a secluded and primitive village in the midst of the Lake District. The conditions at this simple and old-fashioned school were very different from those surrounding boys either at any of the great public schools or at private boarding-schools. Freedom and simplicity particularly characterized Wordsworth's school days. There was neither pressure of work within the class-room nor that of tradition and public opinion outside of it, such as belong to the English public schools ; on the other hand, the close supervision and confinement which usually belong to a private school, were absent. The boys lodged with the cottagers of the village, and grew inured to the simplicity of their lives. After school hours each boy must have been, in the main, free to follow his own devices. No conditions could have been more suitable to Wordsworth's temperament, or more favourable to the development of his strong individuality. Finally, and most important of all, Hawkeshead lay in the midst of a beautiful and varied country, with whose different aspects their favourite amusements must have made the boys very familiar. Their sports were not of the elaborate, competitive character of later times, but took the form of rambles on the mountains, boating and skating on the lakes, nutting and fishing. In these Wordsworth, a vigorous and healthy boy, greatly delighted. There was probably nothing about him, at this period, which would mark him out, either to himself or to others, as different from, or superior to, his school-fellows. One peculiarity he did, however, possess to a very extraordinary degree —sensitiveness to the aspects of nature. Not that he went mooning about, after a precocious fashion, in search of the picturesque. The ordinary round of daily life kept him in contact with nature in some of her most beautiful and impressive forms, and produced upon his, in this regard, receptive mind effects of a most potent and permanent kind. It kept him in close contact, too, with the common people, with the "statesmen," the shepherds, and peasants of the district ; and from these two sources, nature and the life of the people, he drew the material of his later works.

In October, 1787, Wordsworth entered the University of Cambridge through the kindness of his uncles, for his father had been dead some years. His collegiate life contributed but little to his development. His character was at once strong and narrow, only pliant to congenial

influences. He himself said that his peculiar faculty was *genius*--by which he meant creation and production from within—not *talent*, the capacity of assimilation and appropriation from without. Wordsworth's fruitful knowledge came to him direct from observation and meditation. He seems, accordingly, to have gained little from the regular studies and teaching of Cambridge; nor did he find any special stimulus, as many have done, in the social opportunities which it affords. In college society his powers had no opportunity to show themselves; nor did he form any very intimate or influential friendships. Not that he was, during this period, a recluse; he took his share in ordinary college life; but at college, as at school, he would probably not have impressed an onlooker as being in any respect superior to the average student. By degrees, however, he himself became aware of his special powers, and felt the call to the poetic vocation. In 1784 he wrote his first poem, *An Evening Walk*, which was not published until 1793. Among the most important events of his external life may be numbered his pedestrian tours. Wandering, he tells us, was with him an inborn passion; and it was one in which he indulged throughout his life. In 1790, he with a fellow collegian made a three months' tour of France, Switzerland, Northern Italy and the Rhine. These were stirring days on the Continent; the year before, the Bastille had fallen, and Wordsworth shared, as did most intelligent young Englishmen of his time, in the joy which welcomed the new birth of liberty. As yet, however, natural scenery exercised over him a more powerful influence than human affairs. The impressions of this journey are recorded in *Descriptive Sketches*, a poem which was not written, however, until two years later.

In the beginning of 1791, he took the B.A. degree. His friends wished him to enter the church, but he was reluctant, although he had no definite views of his own. He lingered in London for three months, noting men and things in the keen, meditative fashion natural to him; he made a tour in Wales; he thought of writing for the newspapers. At length he determined to spend a year in France, in order to master the language, with the idea that he might turn it to account in the capacity of a travelling tutor. This stay in France had a very important influence on the poet's development. To escape English society, he went to Orleans. His chief companions there were some French officers who were, most of them, partisans with the old regime. One, however, General Beaupuis, was a lofty and enlightened sympathizer with the Revolution; and through him Wordsworth soon came to take a profound interest in the great struggle going on about him. He was in Paris

shortly after the September Massacres, and felt so deeply the importance of the crisis that he was on the point of throwing himself personally into the contest on the side of the moderate republicans ; but he was under the necessity, probably through lack of money, of returning to England. Change of place did not cool his sympathies. The bloodshed and outrage which accompanied the Revolution and which alienated many of its admirers, Wordsworth with clearer insight perceived to be not the outcome of the new spirit of freedom, but of the oppressions of ages. But when, in the spirit of the era which was supposed to be forever past, the new republic proceeded to embark on a career of conquest : abroad crushed the liberty of Switzerland, and at home began to develop into a military despotism, Wordsworth lost his hope of the future and faith in humanity. A period of deep depression followed, from which he at length, though slowly, recovered. In fact, he passed through a crisis such as befalls many thoughtful men, such as is recorded in the biographies of Carlyle, and of John Stuart Mill ; and such as in familiar life often takes the religious form popularly styled "conversion." Faith in one's own future or the future of the world is shattered, and new truths have to be apprehended, or old truths more vitally realized, in order that the man may once again set out on his life's course with some chart and with some aim. The peculiarity of Wordsworth's case is that his crisis took place in connection with the greatest event of modern history, not with a merely individual experience ; and, secondly, in the peculiar source where he found healing—not in books or the teachings of others, not in what would be ordinarily called a religious source, but in a revelation and healing that came to him direct from visible nature, and from contemplating the simple lives of the "statesmen" and shepherds of his native mountains. The poet's hopes ceased to centre around any great movement like the French Revolution, and he perceived that, not in great political movements, but in the domestic life of the simple, unsophisticated man, is the true anchor for our faith in humanity and our confidence in the future of the race.

Meanwhile, his life had been unsettled, and his prospects uncertain. Unexpectedly, early in 1795, a solution of his difficulties as to the choice of a profession came in the shape of a legacy from a young friend, Raisley Calvert, who had insight enough to perceive the genius of Wordsworth, and left him £900 to enable him to follow out the promptings of this genius. With the strictest economy and utmost plainness of living, Wordsworth judged that this would suffice to maintain him ; and he determined to devote himself unreservedly to what he felt was his

true vocation—poetry. He combined his scanty means with those of his sister Dorothy ; they reckoned from all sources upon a joint income of £70 or £80 a year. Dorothy Wordsworth merits, even in the briefest sketch of her brother's life, at least a passing notice. She shared all his tastes and much of his genius. She was one of the “dumb poets.” She had all her brother's insight into nature, all the feelings which belonged to his poetic endowment ; but the instrument of verse she never mastered, or, perhaps, did not seek to master ; for she devoted her whole life unselfishly to him. His sister Dorothy and the poet Coleridge were, he tells us, the only persons who exerted a profound influence on his spiritual and poetical development.

It was in 1796 that Wordsworth became acquainted with Coleridge ; the two men had many interests and opinions in common, and a close friendship sprang up between them. In order to be near Coleridge the Wordsworths rented a house at Alfoxden, in Somersetshire, in July, 1797. The two men exercised an influence upon each other highly favourable to their intellectual and poetic activity. They planned a volume of poems to which each should contribute. The result was the *Lyrical Ballads*, one of the most notable publications in the history of later English poetry. Coleridge furnished four poems,—*The Ancient Mariner*, and three smaller pieces. The bulk of Wordsworth's contributions was much greater ; and this volume was the first of his writings to manifest the peculiarities of his genius and the greatness of his power. It included the *Lines Composed above Tintern Abbey*, *The Thorn, Expostulation and Reply*, *The Tables Turned*, *Lines Written in Early Spring*, etc. It was in 1798 that the *Lyrical Ballads* were issued ; in autumn of the same year Wordsworth, his sister, and Coleridge sailed to Germany. The visit had no special influence upon Wordsworth, whose time was mainly employed in writing poems thoroughly English in character. In the following spring they returned home. In December, 1799, the brother and sister settled down in Dove Cottage, Grasmere, and Wordsworth entered upon a course of life which varied but little during the many years that remained to him. Poetic composition and the contemplation of nature formed the staple of his regular occupations. Of the character of his daily life, the best idea is to be obtained from his sister's diaries, from which large excerpts are given in Knight's *Life of the poet*. The following extract may serve as a sample ; it is dated Saturday, May 1st, 1802 :

“A clear sky. . . . I sowed the flowers, William helped me. We went and sate in the orchard. . . . It was very hot. William wrote

The Celandine. We planned a shed, for the sun was too much for us. After dinner we went again to our old resting-place in the hollies under the rock. We first lay under the holly, where we saw nothing but the trees, and a budding elm mossed, with the sky above our heads. But that holly tree had a beauty about it more than its own. . . . When the sun had got low enough we went to the rock shade. Oh, the overwhelming beauty of the vale below, greener than green. Two ravens flew high, high in the sky, and the sun shone upon their bellies and their wings, long after there was none of his light to be seen but a little space on the top of Loughrigg Fell. Heard the cuckoo to-day, this first of May. We went down to tea at eight o'clock . . . and returned after tea. The landscape was fading: sheep and lambs quiet among the rocks. We walked towards King's, and backwards and forwards. The sky was perfectly cloudless. . . . Three solitary stars in the middle of the blue vault, one or two on the points of the high hills."

In 1802 he married Mary Hutchinson, whom he had known since childhood; but this event scarcely interrupted the even tenor of his way. He had a few intimate friends, such as Coleridge and Sir George Beaumont, and in time his writings drew younger men to visit him, De Quincey, Wilson ("Christopher North"), and even to take up their residence in his neighbourhood. But, on the whole, his life during his prime was the life of a recluse. Nor, with his humbler neighbours, though interested in their welfare, was he on terms of genial intercourse such as marked the relations of Scott to those about him. He was, in short, self-centred, wrapped up in his own thoughts—a reserved man, with a cold and absent-minded exterior. "He wasn't a man as said a deal to common folk," said one of these common folk to an enquirer, "but he talked a deal to hissen." "He was not a man that folks could crack wi'," said another, "nor not a man as could crack wi' folks."

Wordsworth was a philosopher in the antique sense of the word, shaping his life according to his own ideals, and little regarding the fact that these ideals were very different from those of men in general. He found his happiness in easily attainable sources—in nature, in his own work and thoughts, in literature and domestic life. He cared nothing for wealth or the luxuries which it affords. "Plain living and high thinking" characterized his life; his daily fare and home surroundings were but little superior to those of the peasantry about him. The only luxury in which he indulged was travelling; he made tours in Scotland, Ireland, and the continent, of which his works contain memorials, and these, with frequent visits to friends in England, were among the chief events of his quiet life. The simplicity of the tastes of the household and Mrs. Wordsworth's careful management enabled the poet to subsist with comfort upon an income which would have meant harassing poverty to

most men of his class. His works brought him no money ; but the payment in 1802 of a debt due his father's estate added something to his resources, and when these proved inadequate through the increasing expenses of his family, he fortunately obtained (1813) through the influence of the Earl of Lonsdale the office of Distributor of Stamps for Westmoreland. This afforded him a sufficient income and did not make claims upon time and energy inconsistent with his devotion to poetic work. In the same year, 1813, he removed from Grasmere, where he had resided for some fourteen years (nine of them in Dove Cottage) to Rydal Mount, at no great distance ; this was his home during the remaining thirty-seven years of his life.

In 1839 Wordsworth received the honorary degree of D.C.L. from Oxford, and on the occasion of its bestowal was welcomed with great enthusiasm. In 1842 a pension was offered to him ; in 1843 he was made Poet Laureate. Thus full of years and honours, and in that same tranquillity which marked his life, Wordsworth passed away April 23rd, 1850.

“Every great poet,” said Wordsworth, “is a teacher ; I wish to be considered as a teacher or as nothing.” Wordsworth has, therefore, a didactic aim in his poetry. Happily, however, his conception of teaching was no narrow one ; he did not think that poetry in order to be didactic, must directly present some abstract truth, or be capable of furnishing some moral application ; if a poem kindled the imagination, or stirred the nobler feelings, it contributed in his opinion even more to the education of the reader. His sense of the unity and harmony of things was strong. As in *Tintern Abbey*, we find him giving expression to his sense of the unity of all existence—the setting suns, the round ocean, and the mind of man being all manifestations of one and the same divine spirit—so he believed in the unity and close interconnection of all the faculties of man. No one faculty could be stimulated or neglected without a corresponding effect upon the rest. The delight, for example, afforded by the contemplation of scenery quickened, he thought, the moral nature ; while the man whose imagination or sense of beauty had remained undeveloped must suffer also from limitations and weakness in his ethical constitution. Therefore his work is not generally didactic in the ordinary sense, though not infrequently so ; his poetry may merely stimulate imagination and feeling, and thence educative effects will steal unnoticed into heart and brain.

He was a teacher, then ; but his teaching did not mainly aim at imparting any particular system of abstract truth, though this also it

may sometimes attempt. It rather sought to elevate and ennable the whole character by exhibiting, and making the reader feel, the sources of high and genuine pleasure. It teaches by revealing, by stimulating, by elevating. Wordsworth thought that the fountain of the purest and highest joys lie about us, within the reach of all. The child finds them everywhere :

Spontaneous joys, where nature has its play,
The soul adopts, and owns their first-born sway.

But as we grow older the world imposes on us with its lower allurements—wealth, luxury, ambition—which dull our perceptions and degrade our will until we become blind and indifferent to the fountains of the highest happiness and the truest culture. To these, it is Wordsworth's aim in his poetry to lead us back.

The sources of this happiness and this higher culture the poet had in his own personal experiences, when his heart was sick and his beliefs shattered, found in nature, in the homely round of ordinary duties, in the domestic affections, in the contemplation of the life of men in its simplest and most natural form among the peasantry of his native mountains. These things, accordingly, are what he depicts to us in his poems ; they afford his poetic material ; and with all these things his life fitted him to deal. They are not, however, present simply and for their own sakes, as in the more purely artistic work of Shakespeare or Scott. Wordsworth had a strongly meditative and reflective bent ; what he saw and felt, he naturally made the basis of thought. He was not carried away by his joys and sorrows, as Burns and Shelley. His temperament was cool and self-contained, not emotional and impetuous. Nor was he markedly sympathetic, forgetting himself in the life of others. So his poetry neither gives expression simply to feeling, nor does it afford purely objective pictures of men and women ; it uses these things as material or stimulus to thought. Wordsworth does not forthwith set down what he has felt or seen ; he broods over it and shapes it to moral rather than artistic ends. He is not passionate or animated ; his poems appeal, not to the active and impetuous man, but to the contemplative and thoughtful—to age rather than to youth.

One merit he specially claimed for himself, that he kept “his eye on the subject.” Nothing in the poets who preceded him irritated him more than their inaccuracies (for example, in the delineation of natural scenes), their conscious sacrifice of truth for the sake of what they considered poetic effect, as exemplified, for instance, in their pastoral poetry. The

same spirit which demanded truth in matter called for simplicity and directness in style. He aimed at keeping the reader's eye also on the subject, and did not blur the clearness of the outline of his theme for the sake of the charm of ornament and of technical display. Hence, his style, at its best, is marvellously direct, chaste, and effective ; and, at its worst, tends to prosaic baldness and triviality. So simple, so free from every needless excrescence, so perfectly adapted to the thought, is Wordsworth's expression in his happier moments, that Matthew Arnold has affirmed that he has no style, *i.e.*, the words are so perfectly appropriate that they seem to come from the object not from the writer. "Nature herself seems," says Matthew Arnold, "to take the pen out of his hand, and to write for him with her own bare, sheer, penetrating power. This arises from two causes ; from the profound sincereness with which Wordsworth feels his subjects, and also from the profoundly sincere and natural character of the subject itself. He can and will treat such a subject with nothing but the most plain, first-hand, almost austere naturalness."

In conclusion, two or three great services of Wordsworth as a poet may be enumerated. He opened the eyes of his own generation and still continues, in a less degree, to open the eyes of readers of the present day to the beauties of nature, and to the fund of consolation and joy that may there be found. He showed that we do not need to go to distant lands and remote ages for poetic material, that poetry lies about us, in our own age, in ordinary life, in commonplace men and women. And he overthrew the stilted conventional style of the poetry which was in the ascendant, and showed that the highest poetry might be simple, direct, and plain.

THE REVERIE OF POOR SUSAN.

Written in 1797 ; first published in the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1800). "This arose out of my observations of the affecting music of these birds hanging in this way in the London streets during the freshness and stillness of the spring morning." (*Wordsworth.*)

1. **Wood Street** runs off Cheapside in London.
7. **Lothbury** is another street in the same neighbourhood, the *city* proper.
8. **Cheapside** is the main thoroughfare in the city.

TO MY SISTER.

This poem was composed in the Spring of 1798, in front of Alfoxden House (see p. 80 above), near Nether Stowey ; it was included in the *Lyrical Ballads* published during the same year. The poet notes : “ My little boy-messenger on this occasion [the Edward of l. 13] was the son of Basil Montague. The larch mentioned in the first stanza was standing when I revisited the place in May, 1841, more than forty years after.” The sister addressed is, of course, Dorothy Wordsworth (see p. 98 above).

The poem exemplifies Wordsworth’s sense of the community between man and nature ; the air, the trees, the fields seem to feel as man feels. It also exhibits his sense of the power of nature in moulding and elevating character, and proclaims the value of a passive enjoyment of her spirit and beauty. Such enjoyment may seem idleness, but it is idleness more productive than is the restless analysis of mere intellect (which the world at large calls *useful employment*) inasmuch as it induces a proper temper and frame of mind,—more needful, in the poet’s opinion, for right thinking than are logic and reasoning power.

EXPOSTULATION AND REPLY.

The dates of composition and publication are the same as in the preceding poem. “ The lines entitled *Expostulation and Reply*, and those which follow, arose out of a conversation with a friend who was somewhat unreasonably attached to modern books of moral philosophy.” (*Wordsworth.*)

The ‘expostulation’ is put in the mouth of “ Matthew,” a personage who appears in other poems also, and seems to be modelled upon the poet’s old schoolmaster at Hawkshead, William Taylor ; it is addressed to “ William,” who is the poet himself,—at least the ‘reply’ embodies his peculiar ideas.

13. **Esthwaite lake.** A lakelet, about two miles long, west of Windermere, and in the immediate neighbourhood is Hawkshead, where Wordsworth went to school.

THE TABLES TURNED.

Composed and published in 1798.

These lines are addressed by ‘William’ of the preceding poem, to ‘Matthew,’ and continue the same argument. The point emphasized here is the superiority of the temper and general character begotten by intercourse with nature, to that produced by a purely intellectual attitude of mind which is always busied with pulling things to pieces in order to find the way they are put together, or with seeking reasons for their existence ; but which does not look at things as they are, or have any time for *feeling* about things.

19-20. Truth, the poet believes, is not to be attained by mere logic ; it is the result not of merely mental processes, but of the whole nature of man ; so Tennyson, in *In Memoriam*, cxiii, puts knowledge, which is the product of the *mind*, below wisdom, the outcome of the *soul* ; cf. *John*, vii, 17 : “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.”

“THREE YEARS SHE GREW.”

This poem was written in 1799 whilst Wordsworth was living in Germany, at Goslar, on the borders of the Hartz Forest, and was first published in the Second Edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800).

This poem is as eminently beautiful as it is characteristic of the style, thought, and feeling of Wordsworth : in the simplicity yet charm of its metrical music ; in the directness and naturalness yet effectiveness and beauty of its language ; in the faith which it expresses in the educating influences of nature ; in its subtle communication to the reader of the sense of those influences and of the charm of unsullied maidenhood ; and perhaps most striking of all, in the intensity yet calm and resignation of feeling which permeates the closing lines.

14. **lawn.** An open, grassy expanse ; the word originally meant an open glade in the woods, and the associations with houses and the gardener’s care are modern.

18. **insensate.** In its original etymological meaning : *insensatus*, not endowed with senses.

28. **round.** A dance.

INFLUENCE OF NATURAL OBJECTS.

Written in 1799 ; first published in Coleridge's periodical, *The Friend*, for December 28th, 1809, where it follows Coleridge's prose description of skating on the lake at Ratzeburg. It is a reminiscence of the poet's school-days ; the lake is Esthwaite ; the village, Hawkshead.

Wordsworth and Nature. Nature, *i.e.*, man's dwelling-place—the world of mountains, fields, lakes, sky, trees, etc.—was a more important factor in Wordsworth's life than in that, perhaps, of any other poet. He spent a great part of his time in the contemplation of it, and it shaped his philosophy in a quite peculiar way. In his own experience, this communing with nature had comforted and soothed him even in his time of greatest need, and seemed to stimulate and instruct the higher man within him. Such experience is not, in every respect, unique. Many persons in that day, and still more in ours, have found intense and elevating pleasure in beautiful scenery. But Wordsworth had these feelings to an extraordinary degree, and the circumstances both of his boyhood and of his later life were such as to develop them to the utmost. He possessed, therefore, very unusual qualifications for speaking upon such matters ; and, being master also of the gift of poetic expression, became one of the greatest of nature-poets. He utters for others, with marvellous truth and felicity, what they themselves have vaguely noted or felt in regard to nature ; his keener observation and appreciation enable him to open the eyes of his readers to much of beauty that would have escaped their attention. But, further, Wordsworth's enjoyment of the world about him was not confined merely to pleasure in variety and beauty of form and colour. These things which address themselves to the bodily eye seemed to him the outward manifestations of an indwelling spirit,—a spirit akin to his own, and in harmony with it. The *divine*, in short, lay behind these outward shows ; in them God was manifesting himself, and through them man might come into closest relations with God. Hence, for Wordsworth, there gathered about nature a deep sense of mystery and of reverence ; in his breast it excited feelings of a profound and religious character—far beyond mere delight in sensuous beauty. It is the emphasis that he lays upon this aspect of nature, and upon the feelings derived from it, that gives the most distinctive quality to his nature poetry.

The poem in which we find the most adequate account of Wordsworth's characteristic view of nature, is the *Lines written above Tintern Abbey*, where he also explains that this full appreciation of her significance was a gradual growth. In the poem before us, and in the poem on

Nutting, which follows, we have an exemplification of one of the earlier stages, when Nature takes him in hand,* as it were, and begins her course of instruction. Through no lofty motive but in the pursuit of boyish pleasures, he is brought into close contact with some of the most beautiful aspects of the material world ; these are the background of his daily life and are intertwined with his keenest enjoyments and most vivid experiences ; and at favourable moments, as in those recorded in these two poems, there steal upon his boyish heart some vague consciousness of her beauty and of her power.

1-4. The poet addresses the Spirit of which we have spoken above. This Spirit or Mind gives form and energy to mere material things ; cf. the passage from *Tintern Abbey* cited in the note on *Nutting*.

9. Not, for example, with the mean and perishable surroundings of the poorer classes in an ugly, manufacturing town, but with magnificent mountains and valleys of the Lake country.

10-11. Association with these nobler things elevates the beginnings and sources of our feeling and thought ; cf. *Personal Talk, continued*, ll. 2-4.

12-14. Through the elevation and insight thus attained (viz., by association with what is noble in life and nature) we learn to find, even in pain and fear, sources of consolation and strength, and a proof of the greatness of human nature even in the intensity of our emotions. This is a characteristic thought with Wordsworth ; it lies at the basis of the *Elegiac Stanzas suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle* ; cf. also the close of the *Ode on Intimations of Immortality* :

We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind ;
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be ;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering.

• • • •

Thanks to the human heart by which we live ;
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears.

41-2. Coleridge, in *The Friend*, says : “ When very many are skating together the sounds and the noises give an impulse to the icy trees, and the woods all round the lake tinkle.”

Cf. also Tennyson’s description of a wintry night in *Morte d’Arthur* :

The bare, black cliff clang’d round him, as he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
Sharp-smitten with the dint of iron heels.

* Cf. the poem “ Three years she grew.”

NUTTING.

Written in Germany in 1799, published in 1800 ; intended to form part of *The Prelude*, "but struck out," says Wordsworth, "as not being wanted there. Like most of my schoolfellows I was an impassioned Nutter. For this pleasure, the Vale of Esthwaite, abounding in coppice wood, furnished a very wide range. These verses arose out of the remembrance of feelings I had often had when a boy, and particularly in the extensive woods that still [1843] stretch from the side of Esthwaite Lake towards Graythwaite, the seat of the ancient family of Sandys."

The five selections preceding have all to do with the one theme—the influence of nature as an educator of man. In *Nutting* the poet dwells with fond delight upon a remembrance of boyish years, when, by mere animal activity and childish pleasures, he was drawn into contact with nature in her beauty and repose ; yet, even then, he was half-conscious of her charm, and already vaguely felt a *spirit* in nature, and a sympathy with that spirit—things of which he made so much in his later philosophy, life, and poetry.

The poem is in the main descriptive, and we feel that, to some extent, the poet elaborates and lingers upon the details for their own sake, and because they are associated with a glow of youthful life and the faery charm that haunts the fresh experiences of children. (Cf. *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality* and *To the Cuckoo*.) But it is characteristic of Wordsworth that the poem is (1) not a mere description of nature as it presents itself to the bodily eye, but of nature as influencing man ; and (2) that the picture serves to lead up to an interpretation of nature—to the statement of something which is the outcome, not of mere observation by the bodily organs, but of the imaginative and philosophic faculty :—

A sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man ;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

—(*Lines composed above Tintern Abbey*.)

33. water-breaks. Ripples or wavelets ; cf. Tennyson's *Brook* :

With many a silvery water-break
Above the golden gravel.

MICHAEL.

Written at Town-end, Grasmere, 1800. In Dorothy Wordsworth's journal, under date Oct. 11 of that year, occurs the entry : " We walked up Green-head Ghyll in search of a sheepfold. . . . The sheepfold is falling away. It is built nearly in the form of a heart unequally divided." In the diary there follow numerous references to Wordsworth's working upon the poem, usually at the sheepfold. On Dec. 9, there is the entry : " W. finished his poem to-day," the reference being probably to *Michael*. *Michael* was included in the edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* dated 1800, but actually published in Jan. 1801.

" The character and circumstances of Luke," said Wordsworth, " were taken from a family to whom had belonged, many years before, the house we lived in at Town-end, along with some fields and woodlands on the eastern shore of Grasmere." On another occasion he said : " *Michael* was founded on the son of an old couple having become dissolute, and run away from his parents ; and on an old shepherd having been seven years in building up a sheepfold in a solitary valley." On April 9, 1801, Wordsworth wrote to his friend Thomas Poole : " In writing [*Michael*], I had your character often before my eyes, and sometimes thought that I was delineating such a man as you yourself would have been, under the same circumstances ;" again, " I have attempted to give a picture of a man of strong mind and lively sensibility, agitated by two of the most powerful affections of the human heart,—parental affection and the love of property, *landed* property, including the feelings of inheritance, home, and personal and family independence." To Charles James Fox he wrote : " In the two poems, *The Brothers* and *Michael*, I have attempted to draw a picture of the domestic affections, as I know they exist among a class of men who are now almost confined to the north of England. They are small independent *proprietors* of land, here called 'statesmen,' men of respectable education, who daily labour on their own little properties. The domestic affections will always be strong amongst men who live in a country not crowded with population ; if these men are placed above poverty. But, if they are proprietors of small estates which have descended to them from their ancestors, the power which these affections will acquire amongst such men, is inconceivable by those who have only had an opportunity of observing hired labourers, farmers and the manufacturing poor. Their little tract of land serves as a kind of permanent rallying point for their domestic feelings, as a tablet on which they are written, which makes them objects of memory in a thousand instances, when they would

otherwise be forgotten. . . . The two poems that I have mentioned were written with a view to show that men who do not wear fine clothes can feel deeply. . . . The poems are faithful copies from nature ; and I hope whatever effect they may have upon you, you will at least be able to perceive that they may excite profitable sympathies in many kind and good hearts ; and may in some small degree enlarge our feelings of reverence for our species, and our knowledge of human nature, by showing that our best qualities are possessed by men whom we are too apt to consider, not with reference to the points in which they resemble us, but to those in which they manifestly differ from us."

Wordsworth and man.—We have had several examples of Wordsworth's attitude towards nature, and of the poetic use that he makes of the material derived thence. But Wordsworth's poetry also treats of man and human life, and in this sphere, as in the other, his work presents marked peculiarities. In contrast with the majority of poets, and especially in contrast with the school of poets who had been dominant in England during the greater part of the century, Wordsworth takes his themes from humble, rustic, commonplace life. He thus, at once, abandons the advantages which a dignified or romantic theme, or one which treats of remote times and places, yields. Those very sources of charm which lie upon the surface in the case of *The Ancient Mariner* or of *The Lady of the Lake*—varied and romantic incidents, picturesque manners and costume, plot interest, the stimulus of mystery and curiosity—are usually, as in *Michael*, excluded by the poet's very selection of subject. Nor does he attempt to introduce these attractions in any adventitious way, to invest his poems by his style and treatment with some of these qualities which do not naturally accompany his theme.* What then are the sources of his poetic power? What is it that makes such a poem as *Michael* a work of extraordinary beauty and charm?

There are two main points which should be noted in the poem before us as particularly distinctive of Wordsworth's genius and art. (1) He chooses his theme for the nobility, intensity, and beauty of the emotion involved, not because of the strikingness of the external facts that form the environment of this emotion. In this respect he is unlike Scott ; he cares nothing for picturesque personages and events, provided he finds a subject which presents some noble, affecting, important truth of human

* As Tennyson occasionally does, e.g., in *Enoch Arden*, which affords a very interesting parallel and contrast to *Michael*.

nature. So in *Michael* the fatherly love which is the centre of the whole is a beautiful and noble trait of human nature in whatever surroundings exhibited ; and its tragic disappointment is naturally fitted to awaken intense sympathy in the reader. Evidently these are two great merits—even perhaps the greatest—that a poetic theme could have ; so great, at least, that the poet is able to dispense with many of the more superficial attractions which a romantic poem such as *The Lady of the Lake* affords. Wordsworth, accordingly, neglecting all adventitious and external ornaments, give his whole energy to bringing this fatherly love home to our own hearts and sympathies. If the student will examine the poem from this point of view, he will see that it has a unity which *The Lady of the Lake* cannot boast ; every portion contributes something to make us feel and understand how tender and deep was Michael's love, or else to comprehend that other feeling—Michael's profound attachment to his home and property—which is also essential as leading to the boy's departure from home, and to the tragic conclusion of the story.

(2) The second point to be specially noted is that the poet does not present the series of events simply for their own sake, as Scott and as Shakespeare do ; but that, further, although in a very unobtrusive fashion, he teaches a lesson. (See p. 100 above.) He himself, in his meditative fashion, has found illumination and solace in this simple tale ; he weaves his feeling and his thought through the whole texture of the work and brings it home, if unobtrusively, yet none the less effectively, to the reader. The truth that Wordsworth drew from this picture of humble life, the feeling which it aroused in him, was that of the innate dignity and worth of human nature ; and through the poem he intensifies our sense of reverence for the race, our hopes for the future of mankind. It is noteworthy that though the story is a sad one, the effect of the poem is not depressing—quite the contrary. We are touched and subdued, not harrowed, as by the wretched sensational realism of so much of our present day literature ; we hear

The still, sad music of humanity
Nor harsh, nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue.

Nor is this a chance peculiarity of *Michael* ; it is a pervading note in Wordsworth's philosophy and poetry. The great event of Wordsworth's life was the crisis produced by the French Revolution. (See p. 97 above.) In emerging from this he discovered sources of happiness and consolation open to all, which raised him from the depth of dejection

and pessimism to a permanent level of cheerfulness, and sometimes to heights of ecstatic joy. To reveal these sources of happiness to mankind was his chosen task. And so, whether he treats of nature or of man, Wordsworth is eminently the consoler. "Wordsworth's poetry is great," says Matthew Arnold, "because of the extraordinary power with which Wordsworth feels the joy offered to us in nature, the joy offered to us in the simple primary affections and duties; and because of the extraordinary power with which, in case after case, he shows us this joy, and renders it so as to make us share it. The source of joy from which he thus draws is the truest and most unfailing source of joy accessible to man. It is also accessible universally. Wordsworth brings us, therefore, according to his own strong and characteristic line, word of joy in widest commonalty spread."

Here is an immense advantage for a poet. Wordsworth tells us of what all seek, and tells us of it at its truest and best source, and yet a source where all may go and draw for it."

From this point of view at which we now are, it will be noted that the selection of humble personages and humble life is a positive advantage, because fine feeling and fine character in a situation where the casual advantage of the few—wealth, high culture, etc.—are absent, seem to inhere in human nature itself, and do not seem to be the outcome of surroundings. Note also that here, in some measure, as in *The Lady of the Lake*, we have a picture of manners, customs, and life as developed by special circumstances in a particular locality. But in the case of Scott, the introduction of this element has its ground in the picturesqueness of the life depicted, in its remoteness and romantic character; in the case of Wordsworth, in the fact that the simple, wholesome manner of life is a pleasing spectacle in itself and begets cheering views as to the actual and possible development of the finer elements of human nature under quite attainable conditions. If the picture is poetical, it is poetical because the homely details are ennobled (as they would equally be in real life) by elevation of character and feeling in the person concerned. The only accessory in the poem possessing external beauty, is the scenery of mountain, glen, and storm which forms the background of the human interest. But this, too, is of the essence of the story, because, in the first place, it forms the actual surroundings of the North-country shepherd whose life the poet is realistically depicting; and in the second place, because, according to Wordsworth's belief, some of the essential traits of Michael's character are in part due to the influence of this impressive scene. Michael has

been educated, as Wordsworth describes himself as being educated, by mountains, and storm, and sky.* So that the landscape is also an essential of the situation. Again we have a contrast with Scott ; he describes the scenery of the Trossachs, merely on account of its beauty, as part of the picture for the sensuous imagination. Such set descriptions as are to be found in Scott's poem, are wholly absent from *Michael* ; nature is only introduced as influencing man, and as explaining the action.

Since the main effects, then, of the poem depend upon the intensity of the sympathy aroused in the reader by the central emotion, and upon his belief in the possible existence of such persons, feelings and situations, it is evidently incumbent upon the poet that he should be realistic and should avoid fanciful, idyllic beauties such as are to be found in *The Lady of the Lake*. Accordingly, Wordsworth keeps close to actual facts ; he shuns no bare or homely detail of simple shepherd life ; he adds no borrowed charm from poetic fancy. There is none of the improbable prettiness of Tennyson's *May Queen*.

In unison with the simplicity of the theme and the realistic sincerity of the treatment, the style is simple and direct, sometimes even to the verge of baldness. There is no needless ornament, no seeking for archaic or distinctively poetical language, yet there is no banality or childish simplicity. Wordsworth's expression, here as elsewhere, is marked by directness, sincerity and aptness, accompanied by dignity, beauty and harmony to a degree unsurpassed in the English language. "Nature herself," as Matthew Arnold says, "seems to take the pen out of his hand and write for him, with her bare, sheer penetrating power."

2. Ghyll. "In the dialect of Cumberland and Westmoreland, a short and, for the most part, a steep narrow valley with a stream running through it." (*Wordsworth*.)

51. subterraneous music. "I am not sure that I understand this aright. Does it mean the sound of the wind under overhanging cliffs and in hollows of the hills ?" (*Dowden*.)

115. utensil. The stress is on the first syllable—a pronunciation now almost obsolete.

133. with large prospect. Cf. *Paradise Lost*, IV, 142-4 :

Yet higher than their tops
The verdurous wall of Paradise upsprung,
Which to our general Sire gave prospect large.

Dunmail-Raise. The pass from Grasmere to Keswick.

* See opening of *Influence of Natural Objects*.

169. **Clipping Tree.** “Clipping is the word used in the North of England for shearing.” (*Wordsworth's note.*)

258. “The story alluded to here is well known in the country. The chapel is called Ings Chapel, and is on the right hand side of the road leading from Kendal to Ambleside.” (*Wordsworth's note.*)

283. “There is a slight inconsistency here. The conversation is represented as taking place in the evening (see l. 227).” (*Knight.*)

298. Often distinction is given to a passage by a reminiscence, half unconscious it may be, of Scriptural language; here, for example, is a suggestion of the touching speech of Judah to Joseph (see *Genesis*, xliv, especially vv. 22 and 31).

324. **a Sheepfold.** “It may be proper to inform some readers that a sheepfold in these mountains is an unroofed building of stone walls, with different divisions. It is generally placed by the side of a brook, for the convenience of washing the sheep; but it is also useful as a shelter for them, and as a place to drive them into, to enable the shepherds conveniently to single out one or more for any particular purpose.” (*Wordsworth's note.*)

414-15. After the fashion recorded in Scripture, the covenant is ratified by an external sign; cf. *Genesis*, ix, 13: “I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth;” *Exodus*, xxxi, 16: “Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant;” and *I Samuel*, xviii, 3-4: “Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, and Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him and gave it to David,” etc.

448. Notice how Wordsworth passes lightly over the crisis of anguish and sorrow (as he does also at l. 425) instead of harrowing the feelings by detailing it; the first word here is of *comfort*, not of sorrow, that springs from strength of love. This is characteristic of Wordsworth's attitude. Cheerfulness is with him a duty, a mark of a wholesome nature, the frame of mind needful for the attainment of truth. (Cf. *The Tables Turned*, l. 20.) Wordsworth would fain believe that in the world there is nothing in which there is not an over-balance of good; if there is such an experience, he certainly shuns presenting it in his poetry.

TO THE CUCKOO.

According to Wordsworth himself, this poem was composed in the orchard at Town-end, Grasmere, 1804 ; but entries in his sister Dorothy's journal indicate that it was written in March 23-26, 1802. It was first published in 1807.

As in the case of the *Green Linnet* (see note p. 151), the bird is not the theme of the poem ; here, however, it is the occasion. Certain peculiarities of the cuckoo, sufficiently indicated by the poet, make it suggestive to the childish mind, of the unknown and vague. Most of us can look back on some place or scene, pregnant for our childish minds with vague possibilities of beauty and adventure. In those days there is an interest and freshness about life which gradually vanishes as we grow older. This sense of poetry and romance was abnormally strong in the child Wordsworth. He refers to it repeatedly in his poetry, especially in the *Immortality Ode* and in *Tintern Abbey*, and in the former poem has chosen to suggest a mystical explanation of it.

Of this ideal world in which the mind of the imaginative boy Wordsworth dwells much, the cuckoo became the symbol ; and now, in mature years, as the poet listens to its familiar cry, a two-fold stimulus is given to his feelings : first, through the associations with boyhood and its happiness ; second, through the associations with the ideal and the life of imagination.

18-24. The cuckoo is a shy and restless bird, not easily seen.

31. faery. A variant of the more usual word *fairy*; the form *faery* is connected with Spenser's great poem, and is here specially appropriate as suggesting his meaning of the word pertaining to the region of the ideal and of imagination ; whereas *fairy* is rather suggestive of the more trivial ideas connected with the fanciful beings of childish story.

TO THE DAISY.

This is one of three poems addressed to the same flower, which were written in 1802 at Town-end, Grasmere ; it was first published in 1807.

8. thorough. *Thorough* and *through* are variants of the same word ; cf. *Midsummer Night's Dream*, II, i, 3 : "Thorough brush, thorough brier." Cf. note on *The Ancient Mariner*, l. 64.

23. In what respects the Daisy's function is apostolical is indicated in the previous lines of this stanza.

THE GREEN LINNET.

Composed in 1803, in the orchard at Dove Cottage, Grasmere ; published in 1807.

A green linnet is not in itself the subject of the poem, but is made use of as connected with, or symbolizing an emotion in the poet. Here, as often, the title does not indicate the real theme ; the true subject of this poem, the stimulus which leads the poet to write it, is the joy which he feels at the renewal of nature in spring. The poem is a simple illustration of the distinguishing excellence of Wordsworth's work as described by Matthew Arnold in the passage quoted on p. 142.

The poem before us is perfectly simple ; there is no moral drawn, no hidden meaning. It merely recalls, expresses, intensifies for us the joy we have all felt on a perfect day of spring when

Once more the Heavenly Power
Makes all things new.

On such a day it is enough to live. We seek no reason for our happiness ; it is pure sympathy with nature.

15. With a reference, probably, to the celebration of May 1st ; cf. Tennyson's *May Queen*, and Shakespeare's *Mids. Night's Dream*.

18. **paramours.** As the word is ordinarily pronounced, the rhyme is defective. In ll. 28 and 32, 36 and 40 the rhyme is also imperfect, but, owing to the separation of the lines, these licenses are less objectionable. The word was not originally, and is not here, used in any bad sense.

THE SOLITARY REAPER.

Written between Sept. 13th, 1803, and May, 1805, when Dorothy Wordsworth copied it into her journal ; first published 1807. The following entry is from Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal under date Sept. 13 : "As we descended [they were near Loch Voil] the scene became more fertile, our way being pleasantly varied—through coppices or open fields, and passing farm-houses, though always with an inter-mixture of uncultivated ground. It was harvest-time, and the fields were quietly—might I be allowed to say pensively?—enlivened by small companies of reapers. It is not uncommon in the more lonely parts of the Highlands to see a single person so employed. The following poem was suggested to William by a beautiful sentence in Thomas Wilkinson's 'Tour of Scotland.' " The following is the sentence referred to : "Passed a female who was reaping alone ; she sung in Erse as she

bended over her sickle ; the sweetest human voice I ever heard ; her strains were tenderly melancholy, and felt delicious, long after they were heard no more."

18. **numbers.** The stock poetical word for 'poetry.'

"SHE WAS A PHANTOM OF DELIGHT."

Composed 1804, published 1807. "Written at Town-end, Grasmere. The germ of this poem was four lines, composed as a part of the verses on the Highland Girl. Though beginning in this way it was written from my heart, as is sufficiently obvious." (*Wordsworth's note.*)

22. **machine.** "The use of the word 'machine' . . . has been much criticised. For a similar use of the term see the sequel to *The Waggoner*. The progress of mechanical industry in Britain since the beginning of the present century has given a more limited and purely technical meaning to the word than it bore when Wordsworth used it in these two instances." (*Knight.*) "Does Wordsworth mean by machine merely the body, as Hamlet does in his signature of the letter to Ophelia: 'Thine . . . whilst this machine is to him'? I rather think the whole woman with all her household routine is conceived as the organism of which the thoughtful soul is the animating principle. In Bartram's *Travels*, a book which Wordsworth used for his *Ruth*, I find the following: 'At the return of the morning by the powerful influence of light, the pulse of nature becomes more active, and the universal vibration of life insensibly and irresistibly moves the wondrous machine.'" (*Dowden's note.*)

ODE TO DUTY.

Written 1805; first published 1807. Wordsworth says: "This ode is on the model of Gray's *Ode to Adversity*, which is, in turn, an imitation of Horace's *Ode to Fortune*" [*Odes*, I, 35].

This is one of the finest examples of Wordsworth's power to elevate the homely and commonplace into the highest poetic sphere. In this case he throws the charm of imagination and sentiment, not about a person, or object, or incident of life, but about a feeling—a commonplace and, to the poetic temperament especially, a painful and oppressive feeling—that of moral obligation, that something ought to be done. But for Wordsworth this ever-present element of life is desirable and

beautiful—a source of happiness and strength. Nor is there anything (as is often the case with the views of poets) fanciful, or overstrained, or abnormal in his conception ; it is based upon sound sense and upon daily experience. The Ode is an example of what Matthew Arnold held to be the true function of poetry,—“the criticism of life,”—“the powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life” ; it is not didactic in tone, it does not preach ; it quickens the moral nature by the contagion of noble enthusiasm, by the power of insight and of truth.

The Latin motto may be translated : “Good no longer by resolve, but brought by habit to such a point that I am not merely able to do right, but am *not* able to do otherwise.”

9. There are who. An imitation of the familiar Latin idiom, *sunt qui*.

9-14. Sometimes what is right is performed, not under any sense of restraint, or because it is our duty, but from natural good feeling.

19-20. Referring to the condition of things described in the previous stanza, when the right is done because it is *desirable* and *pleasurable* to us.

37. unchartered freedom. Unrestricted freedom ; cf. *As You Like It*, II, vii, 47-8 :

I must have liberty
Withal, as large a charter as the wind.

Prof. Knight compares Churchill's line : “An Englishman in chartered freedom born,” and doubtless the word was suggested to Wordsworth in connection with political freedom ; an Englishman's freedom is not power to do just as he likes ; it is constitutional, or chartered freedom.

38. Even the very young know something of this weight in holiday times, when there has been, during a prolonged period, an absence of fixed employments, and of calls which must be attended to.

44. The satisfaction that accompanies the consciousness of having done right.

45-48. The idea of duty is here extended from obedience to moral, to obedience, to natural law—an identification especially natural to a poet who finds so close a kinship between man and nature about him. Webb compares Wordsworth's *Gypsies*, ll. 21-2 :

Oh better wrong and strife
(By nature transient) than this torpid life ;
Life which the very stars reprove,
As on their silent tasks they move.

ELEGIAC STANZAS.

Written 1805 ; published 1807. The form of stanza adopted is that usually termed *Elegiac*, familiar through Gray's *Elegy* ; the matter is also in some measure elegiac from the constant reference to the death of the poet's brother John. He was drowned while in command of the East India ship, *The Earl of Abergavenny*, which through the incompetence of the pilot, on leaving Portland struck upon a reef and was lost, Feb. 6, 1805. The previous autumn he had visited his brother at Grasmere. Wordsworth says in a letter : "The vessel 'struck' at 5 p.m. Guns were fired immediately, and were continued to be fired. She was gotten off the rock at half-past seven, but had taken so much water, in spite of constant pumping, as to be water-logged. They had, however, hope that she might be run upon Weymouth sands, and with this view continued pumping and bailing till eleven, when she went down. . . . A few minutes before the ship went down my brother was seen talking to the first mate with apparent cheerfulness ; he was standing at the point where he could overlook the whole ship the moment she went down—dying, as he had lived, in the very place and point where his duty called him. . . . I never wrote a line without the thought of giving *him* pleasure ; my writings were his delight, and one of the chief solaces of his long voyages. But let me stop. I will not be cast down ; were it only for his sake I will not be dejected."

The Peele Castle referred to is not the well-known one on the Isle of Man, but another, the name of which is usually spelled *Piel*, on the coast of Lancashire, near Barrow-in-Furness, and opposite the village of Rampside, where the poet spent four weeks of a vacation in 1794 (see ll. 1-2 of the poem). Sir George Beaumont, an intimate friend of Wordsworth, and in his own day a landscape painter of some note, painted two pictures of this castle, one of which was designed for Mrs. Wordsworth.

4. sleeping. Cf. *Merchant of Venice*, V, i, 54 : " How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank."

8. It trembled. Cf. *Influence of Natural Objects*, l. 20.

What the poet refers to, is the element that is added by the artist to every object he artistically depicts ; he does not represent it exactly as it is, but contributes something from his own imagination—gives a charm, a beauty, a meaning to the object which he feels and puts there, and which is not present in the object itself.

33-36. Cf. *Tintern Abbey*, l. 88, ff.:

For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth ; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh, nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue.

also the *Ode on Intimations of Immortality*, 176, ff.

What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now forever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower ;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind ;
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be ;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering ;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

SEPTEMBER, 1819.

Written in 1819 ; published in 1820.

This and the following poem exemplify Wordsworth's later style. "The most characteristic earlier and most characteristic later style are alike in the limpid coolness of their effect—the effect in the earlier style of bubbling waters, in the later of morning dew. Both alike lay the dust, and take us out of the fret of life, and restore the truth to feeling and cast over the vision of the universe

The image of a poet's heart
How bright, how solemn, how serene !

. . . In the later style . . . objective fact is much less prominent [than in the earlier] ; bald moralities tend to take the place of bald realities ; and, though the buoyancy is much diminished, emotion is much more freely, frankly, and tenderly expressed, so that there is often in it a richness and mellowness of effect quite foreign to Wordsworth's earlier mood." (*Hutton.*)

7. sooth. 'Truth.'

20. vespers. Properly 'evening service' (cf. note on *The Ancient Mariner*, l. 76), hence 'closing service.'

29. radiant Seraphim. Cf. note on *The Ancient Mariner*, l. 490.

UPON THE SAME OCCASION.

Prof. Dowden quotes from Wordsworth's *Description of the English Lakes*: "But it is in autumn that days of such affecting influence most frequently intervene;—the atmosphere seems refined, and the sky rendered more crystalline, as the vivifying heat of the year abates; the lights and shadows are more delicate; the colouring is richer and more finely harmonized; and in this season of stillness, the ear being unoccupied, the sense of vision becomes more susceptible of its appropriate enjoyments."

9. **redbreast.** A different bird from our robin; it is one of the birds that winter in England.

14-15. Cf. *Macbeth*, V :

My way of life,
Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf.

16-17. In Greece and Rome it was customary on festive occasions to wear about the head wreaths of various leaves and flowers, especially roses and myrtles; cf. Horace, *Odes*, I, xxxviii; Ovid, *Fasti*, V, l. 335.

31-36. Wordsworth here regards the Druids as the earliest British poets; their temples were groves of oak and their worship connected with nature; so that the word 'Druid' has been occasionally poetically employed for a poet of nature.

38. **Alcæus.** A native of Lesbos, flourished about b.c. 611, one of the earliest Greek lyric poets who succeeded especially in warlike songs.

46. **Lesbian Maid.** Sappho, Greek poetess, a contemporary of Alcæus, famous for her love poems and her love-story.

48. **Æolian lute.** Early Greek lyric poetry developed in the district of Æolia on the west shores of Asia Minor, south of the Troad. Both Alcæus and Sappho belonged to this district.

50. **Herculanæan lore.** The cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii were buried by an eruption of Vesuvius in 79 A.D.; when rediscovered and excavated many centuries later, a great variety of interesting remains of antiquity were unearthed, works of art, etc.

52. **Theban fragment.** Some fragment from the works of Pindar, the greatest of Greek lyric poets. He was a native of Thebes and flourished about 500 B.C.

54. **Simonides.** Another lyric poet, contemporary of Pindar. "Simonides himself became proverbial for that virtue which the Greeks call *σωφροσύνη*, temperance, order, and self-command in one's

own conduct, and moderation in one's opinions, and desires and views of human life ; and this spirit breathes through his poetry.” (*Smith's Biographical Dictionary.*)

59. Maro. Virgil.

TO THE REV. DR. WORDSWORTH.

Written and published in 1820, addressed to the poet's brother, Christopher, at that time rector of Lambeth, subsequently Master of Trinity College, Cambridge. The poem refers to the familiar English custom of the village choir singing and playing anthems from house to house on Christmas eve.

51. Cytherea's zone. “Cytherea, a name for Venus, who was said to have sprung from the foam of the sea near Cythera, now Cerigo, an island on the south-east of the Morea. On her zone, or cestus, were represented all things tending to excite love.” (*Dowden.*)

52. the Thunderer. Jupiter.

65. Lambeth's venerable towers. Lambeth palace on the banks of the Thames in greater London, the official residence of the Archbishops of Canterbury.

TO A SKYLARK.

Written in 1825 at Rydal Mount ; first published in 1827. In 1845, the second stanza was transferred to *A Morning Exercise*, and Wordsworth said to Miss Fenwick : “I could wish the last five stanzas of this to be read with the poem addressed to the skylark.”

Dr. Sykes quotes Mr. John Burrough's *Birds and Poets* where he speaks of the skylark as “a creature of light and air and motion, the companion of the plowman, the shepherd, the harvester, whose nest is in the stubble and whose tryst is in the clouds. Its life affords that kind of contrast which the imagination loves—one moment a plain, pedestrian bird, hardly distinguishable from the ground, the next a soaring, untiring songster, revelling in the upper air, challenging the eye to follow him and the ear to separate his notes.” In addition to these peculiarities, the reader should know that it is the habit of the lark to sing early in the morning, and to rise singing directly above its nest until it vanishes from sight.

The poem is a fine example of Wordsworth's later moralizing vein with its tendency to draw an explicit lesson. He finds in the song and

habits of the skylark a sort of symbolism of what he himself held to be the true spirit, the best inspiration, and the highest function of poetry. The reader will do well to work this parallelism between the bird and the poet out in detail.

SONNETS.

The **Sonnet** is a poem consisting of fourteen pentameter lines, and these lines are, by means of rhyme, combined in a certain fixed way. The first four lines form a quatrain (*i.e.*, a four-lined stanza), with the first and last lines rhyming, and also the second and third. The next four lines also form a quatrain of exactly the same structure ; and these two quatrains are united by having common rhymes. The rhyme-scheme may therefore be represented as a b b a a b b a.* The eight lines being thus linked together are felt as a whole, and are called the *octave*. The remaining six lines, in a regular sonnet, are not connected by rhyme with the octave, but rhyme together in such a way as also to be felt as belonging to one another ; they are called the *sestette*. The sestette contains three, or two, different rhymes ; the arrangement of the rhymes is left very free, provided only the result be that the sestette is felt as forming a metrical whole. So, for example, with two rhymes a common arrangement is d e d e d e ; or with three rhymes d e f d e f ; but the arrangement d e d e f f is not held to be a good one in the regular sonnet ; because the final couplet is naturally felt as standing apart from the rest, and the sonnet loses its characteristic effect. In the regular form here described a great many beautiful poems have been written, not merely in English, but in other European languages especially in Italian, where the sonnet originated.

The sonnet, from the point of view of form, is, as compared with other poems, markedly a whole made up of parts. There is no reason in *form* why a poem written in couplets or stanzas should not end at any stanza—at the twelfth line, for example, rather than the sixteenth. In form, it is a mere repetition of similar parts ; and, accordingly, it often happens that lyrics written in quatrains have no particular beginning or end ; the poet keeps circling around some central feeling or thought, there is no marked development. On the contrary, the form of the sonnet, as well as its music with the flow and

*English poets take great liberties with the form, and in some sonnets the arrangement of rhymes is different ; but the order given above is the accepted one, and is also the most usual, and, other things being equal, the most effective.

ebb, manifestly lends itself to developed thought—to the expression of ideas which start somewhere and end in some conclusion. Such thought is, other things being equal, more interesting and artistic, than thought which makes no progress ; just as a story with developed plot is more artistic and interesting than a series of loosely-connected scenes. The sonnet therefore is, by its form, suited to the expression of some poetic conception which can be briefly expressed and yet is progressive,—has unity, and development, a beginning, middle, and conclusion. As the form falls into two parts, so also will the thought. The octave will contain the introduction, the circumstances, etc., which give rise to, or serve to explain, the main idea of feeling. The sestette will give expression to this main idea ; and the character of the thought of the concluding lines of the sestette will be such as to indicate that the poem is closing. As the octave consists of two parts, so often will the thought of the introduction divide itself into two parts or stages. Again, the reader cannot but feel that the form of the sonnet is very elaborate, and somewhat rigid. So a sonnet is not fitted to express a strong gush of emotion or intensity of feeling—such as we often find in the ordinary lyric. Burns' songs forced into sonnet-form would quite lose their characteristic flavour of spontaneity, passion, or humour. In the sonnet, too, the movements of line and stanza are slow and dignified. Hence the sonnet is specially adapted to the expression of thoughtful, meditative moods. “When an emotion,” says Theodore Watts-Dunton, very admirably, “is either too deeply charged with thought, or too much adulterated with fancy, to pass spontaneously into the movements of a pure lyric” it is appropriately “embodied in the single metrical flow and return” of a sonnet. As the form of this species of poem compels brevity and suggests premeditation and effort ; so we expect weight and condensation of thought, and exquisiteness of diction. And as it is a developed whole and, like a tragedy, has a certain culmination, we expect this condensation and weight and this perfection of workmanship, more especially in the sestette. If, on the other hand, there is no correspondence between thought and form in the sonnet, no appropriateness in the music, the whole thing seems a useless piece of artificiality, little more interesting than an acrostic.

We have given the broad principles of sonnet construction as borrowed from the Italian ; but English writers, as already indicated, have treated the form at times very freely, and departed even from these more general rules. One variant developed by Elizabethan writers and adopted by Shakespeare, is so marked a deviation from the original as

almost to constitute a different species of poem. Its structure is simple ; it consists of three quatrains, each consisting of lines rhyming alternately, followed by a couplet. The rhyme-scheme is, therefore, a b a b, c d c d, e f e f, g g. Looking at the form of this poem, one might either say it consisted either of four, or of two, parts. In practice, the difference between the three quatrains on the one hand, and the couplet on the other is so conspicuous that the poem seems naturally to fall rather into these two parts. The first twelve lines are introductory ; within these twelve lines the thought may or may not be progressive ; the last two lines contain the gist of the thought, the application or outcome of what has been given in the quatrains ; they have the effect of climax or epigram. It very often happens, however, that the first eight lines are introductory, as in the regular sonnet ; the next four develop the thought towards the conclusion ; while the couplet completes the whole. Regular sonnets have been compared, in their movement, to the rise and fall of a billow, to “a rocket ascending in the air, breaking into light, and falling in a soft shower of brightness.” The Shakespearian sonnet, on the other hand, has been likened to a “red-hot bar being moulded upon a forge till—in the closing couplet—it receives the final clinching blow from a heavy hammer.”

COMPOSED BY THE SEASIDE, NEAR CALAIS.

First published in 1807. Taking advantage of the Peace of Amiens, Wordsworth and his sister visited France in the summer of 1802. The following extract is from Dorothy Wordsworth’s Journal : “ We arrived at Calais at four o’clock on Sunday morning, the 31st of July. We had delightful walks after the heat of the day was passed—seeing far off in the west the coast of England, like a cloud, crested with Dover Castle, the evening star, and the glory of the sky : the reflections in the water were more beautiful than the sky itself ; purple waves brighter than precious stones, forever melting upon the sands.”

WRITTEN IN LONDON, SEPTEMBER, 1802.

“This was written immediately after my return from France to London, when I could not but be struck, as here described, with the vanity and parade of our own country, especially in great towns and cities, as contrasted with the quiet, and I may say the desolation, that

the revolution had produced in France. This must be borne in mind, or else the reader may think that in this and the succeeding sonnets I have exaggerated the mischief engendered and fostered among us by undisturbed wealth." (*Wordsworth's note.*) First published in 1807.

LONDON, 1802.

Written 1802; first published 1807. For what gave rise to this poem see Wordsworth's note on the preceding sonnet. Milton was not a poet merely but a man who in his private life strenuously pursued high ideals, and by his writings strove to foster them in the country.

10. Cf. Tennyson :

O mighty-mouth'd inventor of harmonies,
O skill'd to sing of Time or Eternity,
God-gifted organ-voice of England,
Milton, a name to resound for ages.

“IT IS NOT TO BE THOUGHT OF.”

Written 1802 or 1803, when an invasion by Napoleon was expected; printed in the *Morning Post*, April 16, 1803, and in the Poems of 1807.

4. The quotation is from an Elizabethan poet, Daniel's *Civil War*, II, vii.

“WHEN I HAVE BORNE IN MEMORY.”

Written 1802 or 1803. First printed in the *Morning Post*, Sept. 15, 1803, and included in the volume of 1807.

2-4. The idea that a society which becomes prevailing commercial instead of warlike in its pursuits is at the same time apt to degenerate is a very old and common one in literature; cf., e.g., Tennyson's *Maud*, or Bacon, *On the True Greatness of Kingdoms and Estates*.

COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE.

The date following the title was inserted by the poet himself, who added: “Written on the roof of a coach on my way to France.” But Knight shows that this date is inaccurate. “He left London for Dover on his way to Calais on the 30th of July, 1802. The sonnet was written

that morning as he travelled towards Dover. The following is the record of the journey in his sister's diary: 'July 30—Left London between five and six o'clock of the morning outside the Dover coach. A beautiful morning. The city, St. Paul's, with the river—a multitude of boats, made a beautiful sight as we crossed *Westminster Bridge*; the houses not overhung by their clouds of smoke, and were spread out endlessly; yet the sun shone brightly with such a pure light that there was something like the purity of one of Nature's own grand spectacles.' First published 1807.

Rolfe quotes, in connection with this sonnet, from Caroline Fox's *Memories of Old Friends*: "Mamma spoke of the beauty of Rydal, and asked whether it did not rather spoil him [Wordsworth] for common scenery. 'O, no,' he said, 'it rather opens my eyes to see the beauty there is in all; God is everywhere, and thus nothing is common or devoid of beauty. No, ma'am, it is the *feeling* that instructs the seeing. Wherever there is a heart to feel, there is also an eye to see; even in a city you have light and shade, reflections, probably views of the water and trees, and a blue sky above you, and can you want for beauty with all these? People often pity me while residing in a city, but they need not, for I can enjoy its characteristic beauties as well as any.'"

4. Cf. *Psalm*, civ, 2. "Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment."

THOUGHT OF A BRITON ON THE SUBJUGATION OF SWITZERLAND.

This sonnet was written towards the end of 1806, or in the beginning of 1807 by the poet while pacing to and fro between the Hall of Coleorton, the residence of his friend, Sir George Beaumont, and the principal farm-house on the estate, where he was temporarily living. First published 1807. In 1808 Wordsworth considered this his best sonnet.

In 1802 Napoleon had crushed the liberties of Switzerland; in 1807 he was preparing to invade England.

TO SLEEP.

Published in 1807; no other evidence of date.

8. *cuckoo's melancholy cry*. Very different from "O blithe newcomer" (*To the Cuckoo*). It is the thinking and feeling mind that gives meaning to nature.

“BROOK ! WHOSE SOCIETY THE POET SEEKS.”

First published in 1815 ; no other evidence of date.

5. **waterbreaks.** Cf. *Nutting*, l. 33 and note thereon.

9. **Naiad.** The spirit of a stream, conceived among the Greeks and Romans as a beautiful woman crowned with flowers.

INSIDE OF KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL.

First published among *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* in 1822. Written probably in 1820 when Wordsworth visited Cambridge, or later.

1. **the royal Saint.** The chapel was founded by King Henry VI who had a reputation for sanctity, referred to in Gray's *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton* (of which Henry was also founder) :

Where grateful science still adores
Her Henry's holy shade.

4. **white-robed Scholars.** “At service on Saturday evenings, Sundays, and Saints' days, every member of the College, except the noblemen, has to appear in a white surplice, as though he were about to read the service.” (*Everett's On the Cam*, p. 109.) Everett is speaking of Trinity College, but the practice doubtless holds of other Cambridge colleges.

10. **Self-poised.** Prof. Dowden quotes Fuller (1608-1661). “The chapel is one of the rarest fabrics in Christendom, wherein the stonework, woodwork, and glasswork contend which most deserve admiration. Yet the first generally carries away the credit (as being a Stonehenge indeed), so geometrically contrived that voluminous stones mutually support themselves in the arched roof, as if Art had made them to forget Nature, and weaned them from their fondness to descend to their centre.” The explanation is, of course, that the principle of the arch is employed in the construction of the stone roof, and support is really given by the external buttresses.

11-12. **where music, etc.** Cf. Gray's *Elegy* :

Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.

and Milton's *L'Allegro* :

In notes, with many a winding bout
Of linked sweetness long drawn out.

THE SAME CONTINUED.

For composition and publication, see last sonnet.

8. **younger Pile.** St. Paul's. Westminster Abbey dates from the 13th century : St. Paul's was built 1675-1710.

12-14. **Westminster Abbey** is crowded with memorials to distinguished men ; St. Paul's is (and in Wordsworth's day the disproportion was greater) comparatively vacant.

"SCORN NOT THE SONNET."

Published in 1827, and composed perhaps in the same year, "almost extempore in a short walk on the western side of Rydal Lake."

3. Shakespeare wrote a long connected series of sonnets, which, by the majority of critics, are held to express certain experiences and feelings of his own life.

4. **Petrarch.** (1304-74.) Italian poet, one of the earliest of the great names in modern literature, and the first to give vogue to the sonnet. His sonnets chiefly treat of his unrequited passion for a certain lady named Laura.

5. **Tasso.** (1544-95.) Italian poet, author of the epic *La Gerusalemme Liberata*, on the subject of Godfrey de Bouillon and the Crusaders.

Camoëns. Portuguese poet who, in 1556 was banished to Macao, a Portuguese settlement in China, and there wrote many sonnets and lyrics. His chief work is the *Lusiad*.

7-9. **Dante.** [1265-1321.] A Florentine, the greatest of Italian poets and one of the greatest of all poets ; his chief work is the *Divine Comedy*, in which is presented a vision of Heaven, Purgatory, and Hell ; many of his sonnets are found in his *Vita Nuova*, written in his twenty-eighth year, at a happy epoch of his life. His later life was passed in exile from his native city, and in sadness.

9-11. Spenser's sonnets, like Shakespeare's, form a series, and narrate the story of his love and marriage ; they are not by any means his most successful work, and, while possessing charm and beauty, are greatly inferior in power to those of Shakespeare or Milton ; hence, presumably, "mild glow-worm lamp."

Faeryland. The scene of his great poem, *The Faery Queen*.

dark ways. A reference to the misfortunes of his actual life ; he was under the necessity of living in Ireland—which then meant an almost total banishment from society and the advantages of cultivated life ; his house was sacked and burned, and he died in poverty in London.

11-12. Milton's sonnets, chiefly written between 1638 and 1658, "are the few occasional strains that connect as by intermittent trumpet blasts through twenty years, the rich minor poetry of his youth and early manhood with the greater poetry of his declining years." (*Masson.*)

14. **Soul-animating strains.** See, for example, those *On his Blindness*, *On the Late Massacre in Piedmont*, *To Cromwell*.

